

The Jilted Bridegroom

Text: Luke 19:41-48

Hymn: "The Church's One Foundation" (LSB 644)

When Jesus drew near and saw the city, he wept over it, saying, "Would that you, even you, had known this day the things that make for peace."

The Bridegroom had promised to come. The Bridegroom promised riches beyond imagination. The Bridegroom promised safety and security. The Bridegroom promised peace, real peace, eternal peace. The Bridegroom promised to be faithful. The Bridegroom promised that He would come and at the right time, that the union that they would have would be perfect, eternal, and pleasing in the sight of God

The Bridegroom showed up just as He said. The Bridegroom showed up and the bride was unimpressed. The bride said, "Of course, I want all the stuff you promised." But the Bridegroom was rejected by the bride. The bride refused the Bridegroom. The Bridegroom's heart was broken. The Bridegroom, Jesus, wept.

We see in our Gospel reading Jesus, who had promised through the prophets of old that when the time was right He would take His holy bride to Himself. As we just sang, "From heaven He came and sought her." He sought her. He sent prophets to remind her of His great love. And when she strayed, He forgave her.

About halfway through the Gospel of Luke, the end of Chapter 9, Jesus set his face resolutely toward Jerusalem (v 51). He knew what awaited Him there: Pain, suffering, sorrow, crucifixion, death, burial. He knew it. And yet He went there anyway. He went there to seek His bride. He went there to call the children of Israel to Himself.

Here in Luke 19, Jesus, the Bridegroom, has arrived. The bride wanted nothing to do with Him. She had her own life that she was living. She had other suitors she

found more desirable. She had a peace of her own making, security of her own making. Jesus wept.

Why did He weep? “Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace!” You think you have peace. You think you have security. You think you have a future. But you are wrong. And Jesus wept.

The account of Jesus praying over Jerusalem hits me the way the story of Elijah under the broom tree does. You remember it, don’t you? Elijah sat down under a broom tree and asked God that he might die. At first, as a pastor, it’s a comfort to know that one of the greatest preachers in the Bible, the John Wayne of Old Testament prophets, who stood up to the king and Jezebel and the prophets of Baal, got discouraged and fell prey to bitter feelings. But then it occurs to me that Elijah was so faithful in his ministry, he basically had the world looking to kill him. Until I’ve been faithful to the point of imminent danger to my life and livelihood, I don’t get to put myself in Elijah’s shoes; basically, all I’ve got in common with him is the complaining.

Likewise with Jesus weeping over Jerusalem. We rightly draw comfort from this. We see in Jesus’ weeping His humanity. We see a Savior not distant but one who sympathizes with our weaknesses, who knows sorrow and disappointment just as we do. And yet what do we cry about? I’m not talking about the causes for genuine sorrow—the death of a loved one, a terminal diagnosis, a broken relationship. I’m talking about what we usually cry about—the Cowboys losing, our candidate not winning, COVID measures standing in the way of our trip to Aruba. In the U.S. alone there are every day more than 2,000 children killed by abortion, which is four times the number of daily COVID deaths, and that abortion statistic has lasted 30 times longer.

But which do we actually cry about? No, we have about as much reason to see ourselves in Jesus' weeping as I do in Elijah's complaining.

Because why is Jesus weeping? *He is weeping because the very people for whom He came to save rejected Him.* He weeps because the people He came to suffer and die for have closed their ears to God's words. He weeps because the people He came win back to God think they can create their own peace. He weeps over sins forgiven but not believed. He weeps over false prophets who promise "Peace, Peace," when there is no peace. Jesus looks at Jerusalem and He weeps. Because there were and are so many who did not and still do not want the peace that Jesus gives.

Our text goes on to talk about the destruction that's coming. Judgment on the children of Israel. Judgment that forty years or so later was fulfilled with the destruction of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple—all the things that Jesus predicted came true. If God in His justice and love would mete out that justice on the children of Israel, who are we to think that He would not mete out that same justice on our world today or on our country or on our church? We don't want to hear that part of God's Word, do we? We want to hear from people who promise a different kind of peace.

God wants us to realize us what time it is. We heard that in our Old Testament. Even the birds—the stork in the heavens, turtledove, swallow, and crane—know what time it is. They "keep the time of their coming." It's August; it's nearly the time to think about migrating.

Do you know what time it is? God asks us today, Do you know what time it is? Jesus says, All these things happened, because "they did not know the time of their visitation." Do you know what time it is? Today is the day of your visitation. Yes, Jesus

comes and brings pleasures eternal. The Bridegroom is here. He is knocking on the door. He is calling. He is courting. He is inviting. "Come to me, all you who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest." That's a promise from the lips of Jesus. Jesus promises rest, peace, not peace as the world promises, peace that is fleeting; He promises real peace, true peace, lasting peace, saving peace. Peace that cost Him His life. Freely shed on Calvary's Cross. For you.

Today is the day of your visitation. Jesus comes to you in His Word and He is calling you to believe the Word of God. The Word of God's judgment and the Word of God's forgiveness, to believe God's Word of Law and the Word of God's Gospel. He is calling each of us to repent. Today is the day of our visitation.

Just a few chapters earlier, Luke 13, there were some present at that time who told Jesus about some Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices and Jesus answered them, "Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans, because they suffered in this way? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish" (13:1-5). He goes on, "Or those eighteen who on whom the Tower of Siloam fell. Do you think they were worse offenders than all the others who lived in Jerusalem? But unless you repent, you will all likewise perish."

Jesus teaches us what to do when bad things happen in the world. When we hear of a drought or an earthquake or a tsunami or a pandemic, we are to repent. We are so preoccupied with blaming someone else for our problems, we don't hear the Word of God. They aren't worse sinners than you. This is a call to repent. This is the day of your visitation.

There are a lot of nasty things going on in our world. There is a lot of bad stuff going on in our country. What does Jesus say? See what time it is! It's the day of your visitation. Repent. Believe the Good News of Jesus. You hear how our Gospel text ended? People kept plotting and scheming; they even wanted to destroy Jesus. But they couldn't. They couldn't get to Him, because of all the people who were *hanging on His words*. What a beautiful picture!

We know what it is to hang on words, don't we? We anxiously await the relaxing of restrictions or case count numbers, death count numbers. We sit on the edge of our seats for the draft pick announcements or run to the mailbox to see if the college admissions letter finally arrived. It should be the same for us and God's Word. We should hang on Jesus' Word the way a bride does the words "I will" from her Bridegroom. Because that is who Jesus is to us, His church—our loving, caring, faithful, protecting Bridegroom.

The Bridegroom who was murdered by His bride, took up His life again, and comes for you. He has lived a perfect life for you. He has bled and died for you. He has risen victorious over sin, death, and the grave. He even now pleads the merits of His sacrifice before His heavenly Father for you. And He says to you, "For every time you rejected me, for every time you cheated on me, for every time you hung on words that were meaningless and ignored my own life-giving, life-changing words, I forgive you. I forgive you and I give you peace." The Bridegroom says, "I will," and His "I will" is for all eternity. Hang on to His Words, dear Christians; His Words and His Words only are Words of eternal life.

Pastor Brent McGuire
Our Redeemer Lutheran Church