

Pax Domini
Luke 19:41-48

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Our meditation today is from the Gospel reading, especially verse 42:
“[Jesus said:] would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace!”

Dear sinner, your primary problem is not with the world or with Satan or with your old man, but it is with God Himself.

Satan doesn't send people to hell. How could he? Hell was made by God for Satan and his angels.

God sends unrepentant sinners to hell at the final judgment. God is the righteous judge who condemns all manner of unrighteousness.

Does that sound harsh to you Lutheran ears?

There are a couple of reasons I can think of why it might sound harsh. The first is because you know the love of Jesus. God punishing the wicked doesn't sound right to you.

But let me give you a scenario.

Let's say you have a vicious murderer. Someone who has undoubtedly done the crime with a ton of clear evidence that he indeed is the murderer. Now let's say that not only is he a vicious murderer, but he murdered someone close to you. How would you feel if a judge with all the clear evidence allowed this despicable murderer go free?

Our heavenly judge is a just judge:

“The wicked shall return to Sheol,
All the nations that forget God.
For the needy shall not always be forgotten,
And the hope of the poor shall not perish forever.” (Ps 9:17-18)

And there are so many other references in the Psalms of God’s righteous judgment against the wicked.

Jesus weeps here because He knows the temporal judgment that will come against Jerusalem in AD 70 for not knowing the time of Jesus’ visitation. (v. 44) As John says, “[Jesus] came to His own and his own people did not receive Him” (Jn 1:11)

In this passage they cheer Him into Jerusalem, but are nowhere to be found at His crucifixion. In AD 70, by God’s judgment, Jerusalem and the temple were utterly destroyed. If you’ve seen the horrors of WWI or WWII or the Vietnam war, you might be able to imagine the horrors that happened when the Roman army utterly decimated Jerusalem. Jesus weeps because He knows what will happen to His chosen people because of their impenitent hearts.

Jesus is coming again in judgment. And this judgment will be much worse than the judgment against Jerusalem in AD 70. God doesn’t want you to suffer eternal punishment. As Peter says, “The Lord... is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.” (2 Ptr 3:9) Jesus is coming again and then there will be judgment. He will separate the sheep from the goats and send the goats to the place prepared for Satan and his angels. (Mt 25:31-46) At that time, there will be no pleas or mercy... only judgment.

That also sounds harsh for another reason.

The second reason God's judgment may sound funny to your ears is because you know you are a sinner. At least, that's what you confessed a few minutes ago! You're like Isaiah, "woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!" (Is 6:5)

When you come against God's perfect law, you know you're a sinner. Genesis tells us that we are born in the image of fallen Adam (Gen 5:3) and that the "intention of man's heart is evil from his youth." (Gen 8:21) Jesus says that out of your natural heart "come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander." (Mt 15:19) Even as a Christian, you cannot bear God's perfect Law. Paul describes the Christian life: "For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep doing." (Rom 7:19)

Do you know the thing that makes for peace?

If God requires perfection, and I mean absolute perfection according to His law, and you do not have it, you must obtain a perfection not your own to have any chance with God.

You are weak, but Paul says, "For while we were still weak, at the right time, Christ died for the ungodly... God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we have now been justified by His blood, much more shall we be saved by Him from the wrath of God" (Rom 5:7-9) You are saved *from* God's wrath.

You cannot make yourself a friend to Jesus. He must make Himself a friend to you. And He makes Himself a friend to you by dying for you. The compassion you see in His weeping drove Him to suffering and the cross so that you are saved from His wrath!

Do you know the thing that makes for peace?

The death of Jesus upon the cross paid for the sin of the entire world. We call this universal atonement. The blood of Jesus pays for the sins of all people in all times. It pays for your sin and mine. "Where there is forgiveness of sins there is life, [that is eternal life,] and salvation." (LSC) In other words, where there is forgiveness of sins, there is peace with God.

Do you know the thing that makes for peace?

God has objectively reconciled the world to Himself by His death on the cross. You must subjectively receive that reconciliation in the means that He has prescribed. In other words, you must believe that the objective reconciliation between God and man is yours in Christ.

You know the means that I'm talking about, but I'd like to focus on one of them.

You certainly know about the Word of God. Faith in God, or believing that forgiveness is yours for the sake of Christ, comes through hearing the Word. (Rom 10:17)

You certainly know about baptism, which made you a child of God and brought you into the church. (Titus 3:5-8)

You certainly know about Absolution, where God "pronounces forgiveness, from the pastor as from God himself," (LSC, John 20:22-23) even if you've lost the appreciation for private confession and absolution. We'll talk about that another time.

What I want to focus on is our Lord's Supper. The Lord's Supper "is the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ under the bread and wine, instituted by Christ Himself for us Christians to eat and to drink." (LSC)

Do you know the thing that makes for peace?

Many people look for Jesus in the places where He has not promised to be. They look in their hearts or minds or emotions. They look at sages or dreams or intuition. Jesus weeps for them as well because destruction waits for them.

Jesus is in His Word and in His Baptism, but He is in the Lord's Supper in a unique way. He is there bodily! Our Lord descends from heaven and is present here with us in His Supper.

Do you believe this?

How would you act if the President of the United States or the Queen of England came to worship here with us at Grace Lutheran Church? Would your behavior change? Would your dress change?

How should you act when the creator and savior of the universe comes here personally to you at Grace Lutheran Church?

I wonder if our churches would be so empty if we truly believed and boldly proclaimed that Jesus is here with us personally! In the flesh. Unlike in any other place.

The same body that hung upon the cross is served to you under simple bread. The same blood that flowed from Jesus' side is served to you under simple wine. This is why we take closed communion so seriously! But that's a discussion for another time!

Dear Christian, you've heard the Word and you believe. You've been baptized and washed clean from all your sin. You have been and will be fed with the very body and blood of your Savior. You *know* the thing that makes for peace.

I pronounce to you what I pronounce to you after the Words of Institution:
The Peace of the Lord be with you always!

Amen.

In Jesus' name. Amen.