

He Weeps, Showing Mercy and Pity

Trinity 10

Luke 19:41-48; Jeremiah 8:4-12; Romans 9:30-10:4

#1108

12 August 2007

In the Collect for today we prayed to our God who declares His “almighty power above all in showing mercy and pity.” What a strange-sounding combination! “Almighty power” sounds so very strong and assertive, even forceful. And, to our modern, American ears, “showing mercy and pity” sounds, well, so wimpy, wimpy, wimpy. After all, when someone tells us to show mercy and pity, we typically fear that we will get walked on, taken advantage of, and passed over for promotion. And, come on, how many “manly men” do you really expect to shed a single tear let alone openly weep?

But not so with our gracious God! He weeps. He weeps with great strength. In fact, His weeping shows the great, almighty power of His loving mercy and pity.

We can almost see the tears flowing down God’s face in our first reading. As God speaks through the prophet Jeremiah, He truly laments the *“perpetual backsliding”* of His holy people. *“They hold fast to deceit; they refuse to return,”* God says. He has paid attention to them, but they returned the favor by ignoring Him. As God says, with tears streaming down His loving face, *“Everyone turns to his own course, like a horse plunging headlong into battle. Even the stork in the heavens knows her times, and the turtledove, swallow, and crane keep the time of their coming, but my people know not the just decrees of the LORD.”* And His “just decrees” are not just His holy Commandments, His divine design for all of life. His “just decrees” also include His message of victory over sin, death, and the devil; they include His message of justice in forgiving our sins. But His tears flow because His own people don’t pay attention. They don’t live in repentance and faith!

And our Lord weeps not just for His people in the pew who may pay little attention to His words of justice in forgiveness; He also weeps for those He calls to proclaim His words. *“From the least to the greatest everyone is greedy for*

unjust gain; from prophet to priest, everyone deals falsely.” Yes, our Lord weeps when His pastors and preachers heal *“the wound of [His] people lightly, saying, ‘Peace, peace,’ when there is no peace.”* You see, there is no peace – no true and genuine peace – when sins go unconfessed, when tears of repentance refuse to flow. There is no peace when God’s people, both in the pew and in the pulpit, don’t cling to His gracious promises in faith.

In our Gospel reading we most certainly see our almighty, powerful God-in-the-flesh weeping with freely flowing tears. *“When [Jesus] drew near and saw the city – that is, Jerusalem, the holy city – he wept over it, saying, ‘Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace!’”* Oh, how He wants His people to have Him for their peace! Oh, how He longs to shower them with His mercy and pity! But their rejection of Him, their lack of repentance, and their unbelief – they all forecast certain doom. For Jerusalem that meant an invading army surrounding the city and tearing it down to the ground. September 11th was child’s play compared to that! Yes, God would orchestrate the destruction of His own “holy city.” Why? *“Because [they] did not know the time of [their] visitation.”* They did not know that the peace of God – peace almighty and powerful, peace of divine mercy and pity – had come to them all wrapped up in the Person of Jesus of Nazareth.

The people in Jeremiah’s day refused to return to the God who loved them and wept for them. The people in Jesus’ day refused to receive Him, the Son of God, as their peace with God. What about us, the people of God today? Do we turn away from God in a perpetual backsliding? Yep. At least every day, even every time we think we matter most and God, as well as other people, matter least. Do we not know the time of our gracious visitation? Nope, not all of the time. Think of the times we neglect to thank God for the food on our table, the money in our wallet or purse, the car we drive, the house where we live. Even more, we forget our

gracious visitation when our mind wanders during the sermon, or when we come to the Lord's Table more out of habit than hungering for our Lord to come and show mercy and pity. And what of God's "just decrees" in teaching us to be content with the spouse, the family, and the goods that we already have? What of God's "just decrees" that tell us to protect the reputation of others, or to protect their money and possessions? What of His decrees to keep the marriage bed pure, to protect all human life from womb to tomb, and to honor every authority that He has so graciously given us? And most importantly, what of His "just decrees" to gladly hear and learn His Word of forgiveness and life, to call upon Him in every trouble, pray, praise, and give thanks, and to fear, love, and trust Him above all things?

Yes, our Lord weeps. He weeps because He gives Himself so completely to us in mercy and pity, even in showing us how life works best according to His design. He weeps and says, "Oh, how I long to enjoy life with you now and into eternity! Oh, how I long to shower you with My promises and heavenly treasures!" And do you know what? That's exactly what He does to bring you back to Himself – each and every day, each and every Lord's Day.

Thank God that your Lord weeps over a Jerusalem that had gone astray! His weeping shows His almighty, powerful love and mercy. It's the same love and mercy that led Him to weep over the grave of Lazarus. "*Jesus wept*" (Jn. 11:35) because of death's cruel, suffocating tyranny – not just for Lazarus, but also for us and all people. Oh, how He longed to free Lazarus and all people – including us – from the clutches of sin and death! And Jesus would do just that as He hung nailed to the cross, and as He burst forth from the grave. Perhaps we can picture Jesus on the cross with tears freely flowing as He says, "*Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do*" (Lk. 23:34). Yet our Lord of almighty power would transform that cross of bitter rejection into His greatest tool for showing mercy and pity! And what happened when Jesus burst forth victorious from the grave? His tears did not cease. No, they changed. In His almighty, powerful mercy and pity His tears changed

from tears of lament to tears of joy, eternal joy, that is. They are the joyful tears of Him who says to you, "*Behold, I am making all things new*" (Rev. 21:5), both now and on the Last Day. In His death and resurrection, our Lord Jesus makes us new, because "*if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come*" (2 Cor. 5:17).

So, let the tears of Jesus weeping be your source of comfort, strength, renewal, and hope. He wants you to know the day of your visitation even here today, at His Table. Yes, He comes yet again in His almighty power to visit you and show you His mercy and pity. Just as He entered the Temple to cleanse it of the buyers and sellers, He enters you with His Body and Blood to cleanse you from sin and death. Just as "*all the people were hanging on his words,*" you can also hang on His words: "Given and shed for you, for the forgiveness of sins." It's how He brings you back from your backsliding. It's how He shows you the things that make for peace – true peace, peace with Him, the peace of His mercy and pity.

Remember, almighty Jesus weeps for you – showing mercy and pity. And remember this as, in just a moment, you sing these words:

*Once you were an alien people,
Strangers to God's heart of love;
But He brought you home in mercy,
Citizens of heav'n above.
Let His love flow out to others,
Let them feel a Father's care;
That they too may know His welcome
And His countless blessings share.
(LSB 646:3)*

Lord, Jesus, "mercifully grant us such a measure of Your grace that we may obtain Your gracious promises and be made partakers of Your heavenly treasures." Amen.