2nd Last Sunday of Trinity | 2 Chronicles 36:11-21 | #609-26

In Jesus' name. **Amen**.
People loved by God,
We are coming to the close of the Christian Church year (only one more weekend),
which means that our meditations turn to the ending of this corrupted world.
As we heard in our Gospel text, on the last day, Jesus will come in all His divine glory.
And as we just confessed in the Creed, He is **coming to judge the living and the dead**.
That judgment is really the focal point of our attention on this 2nd to Last Sunday of Trinity.

But the Lord's judgment is not something that we are really to be surprised at.
Yes, we will be surprised at the timing of it, as it will come upon us as **a thief in the night**, Matt. 24:43
And, no doubt, we will be surprised at the whole experience, like Noah would have been in the flood.
But as regards what will happen and what His judgment will be, the Lord has not been silent.
So it behooves us to listen and be attentive to God's Word, that we may discern these things rightly.

In Scripture the Lord has given numerous foreshadows of the final judgement for us to meditate on.
We can consider the destruction of the whole world by water in the flood,
and how faithful Noah's family of 8 was saved in the ark.
We can consider the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah by fire and brimstone,
and how "**righteous Lot**" and his 2 daughters were rescued. 2 Peter 2:7
We can consider the final destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 by the Romans,
in which not **one stone was left upon another**, and the people mercilessly slaughtered,
and how those who heard & heeded Jesus' warnings were saved by fleeing according to His word.
And we also have the summary of the destruction of Jerusalem in our text for meditation this morning.

…as follows in Jesus' name:

Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he began to reign, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. He did what was evil in the sight of the LORD his God. He did not humble himself before Jeremiah the prophet, who spoke from the mouth of the LORD. He also rebelled against King Nebuchadnezzar, who had made him swear by God. He stiffened his neck and hardened his heart against turning to the LORD, the God of Israel. All the officers of the priests and the people likewise were exceedingly unfaithful, following all the abominations of the nations. And they polluted the house of the LORD that He had made holy in Jerusalem. The LORD, the God of their fathers, sent persistently to them by His messengers, because He had compassion on His people and on His dwelling place. But they kept mocking the messengers of God, despising His words and scoffing at His prophets, until the wrath of the LORD rose against His people, until there was no remedy. Therefore He brought up against them the king of the Chaldeans, who killed their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary and had no compassion on young man or virgin, old man or aged. He gave them all into his hand. And all the vessels of the house of God, great and small, and the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king and of his princes, all these he brought to Babylon. And they burned the house of God and broke down the wall of Jerusalem and burned all its palaces with fire and destroyed all its precious vessels. He took into exile in Babylon those who had escaped from the sword, and they became servants to him and to his sons until the establishment of the kingdom of Persia, to fulfill the word of the LORD by the

mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed its Sabbaths. All the days that it lay desolate it kept Sabbath, to fulfill seventy years. (ESV)

This is Your Word, heavenly Father; ***sanctify us in the truth, Your Word is Truth****. Amen.* (John 17:17)

Let's begin our consideration first with the destruction to take place: of Jerusalem in our text.
We are told that the Babylonians **broke down the wall of Jerusalem, and burned its palaces,**
and **destroyed all it precious vessels.**
It was a thorough destruction, so that even 100 yrs later, when Nehemiah walked around the city walls
to examine the work to rebuild, he had to dismount his horse because the wreckage was so complete.
But for the Jews, what would have been most surprising… and most demoralizing… was that
the Babylonians also **burned** (and destroyed) **the house of God. …** Of this, they could not fathom.
This, they thought, had been their lucky rabbit's foot; so long as Yahweh's temple
(**His dwelling place, their sanctuary**) was in their midst, God was with them, or so they thought.

But that leads us to the even more disastrous consideration of the destruction of the <u>people</u>.
This was now the 3rd time that the Babylonians were putting down a revolt at Jerusalem,
and Nebuchadnezzar's patience had run out.
This time, the Babylonians **<u>had no compassion</u> on young man or virgin, old man or aged.**
And they **killed their young men with the sword** EVEN **in the house of their sanctuary.**
And they **took into exile those who escaped the sword.**
Only the poorest of the poor remained in the land, along with Jeremiah,
who had faithfully foretold all this to the rebellious people.

And <u>that</u> fact is what truly brought all this destruction upon the people of Judah,
their rebellion, not against Babylon, but against the Lord, and we are wise to consider this ourselves,
The Lord tells us of what their rebellion consisted:
The king **stiffened his neck and hardened his heart against turning to the LORD.**
He did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, and **did not humble himself before Jeremiah.**
But it wasn't just the king, the **officials, priests,** and the **people** were also **exceedingly unfaithful.**
They kept mocking the messengers of God, despising His words and scoffing at His prophets.
And they **polluted** (defiled) **the house of the Lord** (that they considered their good luck charm)**.**

As we have been walking through Israel's OT history these last few weeks,
we have heard some of the ways they had polluted the temple, w/ their idols and idolatrous worship,
and how dilapidated they had allowed the temple to become.
But there was another pollutant, that made way for these other more noticeable defilements,
it was the hypocritical worship of those who professed to believe, but in truth did not.
They may have gone through the motions (**trampled the courts** of the Lord, as Isaiah spoke of it), Is. 1:12
offered many prayers, celebrated the feasts, given offerings, and so on,
They may have appeared to "**draw near with their mouth and honor** Him **with their lips**
but **their hearts** were **far from** Him**.** Is. 29:13
So their sacred assemblies, their worship services, became an abomination to the Lord
where they gathered to perform their obligations, but despised His Word, not listening to it.
In fact, we are told of the Lord's faithfulness, how He **persistently sent His messengers** to them**,**
<u>because</u> **He had compassion on His people and on His dwelling place.**
He warned them through His faithful prophets like Isaiah and Jeremiah, Joel and Amos,

but they would not hear them, and paid no heed to the Lord.

…

This reading is important for us to consider today as well.

Because while we may not see idols in our sanctuary today, and the building is in good repair today,
we, too, are susceptible to **trampling God's courts** and merely performing the outward functions,
mindlessly singing the canticles, standing and sitting as directed, but completely disengaged,
giving our offerings as if they are a duty or a tax, something that must be paid,
rather then a response of thankfulness and trust for the Lord's merciful provision and grace.
Our ears, we may find have been dulled to God's grace, leaving another Church year behind us,
but little more the wiser in godly wisdom than the previous year.
Our **necks** another year **stiffened**, not because of age, but stubbornly ignoring His commandments,
believing <u>we</u> can choose which… and when… and how… we will obey them,
and how serious the consequence should be.
Our **hearts hardened from turning to Him** in true repentance,
not humbling ourselves before the Lord, but expecting Him to accept us as we are.

But if this where you find yourself, then heed the Lord's warning through His OT people.

We read: **the wrath of the LORD rose against His people, until there was no remedy.**
Where the Lord had shone compassion and patience, when it was despised long enough,
He brought upon them their judgment by the king of the Chaldeans… who **had no compassion**.
Even then, His judgment had its warnings, He sent His prophets, His faithful ministers;
there were signs in the world, wars and rumors of wars… it should not have been a surprise.

…

And this is true for us today as well.

He has given us signs to indicate when the end of the world will come, and they have all come to pass.
We are to be ready at any moment to see our Judge.
So, then, how are we to prepare ourselves?
Shall we be ready to enter into the destruction, not only of the world, but also of ourselves?
Has His compassion and patience worn out? Has God's wrath no remedy any longer?
Or is there still hope? Has He a plan to save and rescue His people?

… Yes, there is hope!

2 Timothy 2:13

…as St. Paul point declares, **if we are faithless, God remains faithful—for He cannot deny Himself**.
Where you hear His word preached, there He still remains with His compassion and patience.
Where you hear His commandments, there He calls you to fear, love and trust in Him.
Where you hear sins condemned, there He calls you to repent and look outside yourself for salvation.
Where you hear Christ-crucified as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, your sin,
there God calls <u>you</u> to listen, look, believe and live:
to see in Jesus the death of your hypocrisies and of your stubbornnesses.
Where you hear of the resurrection of Jesus, the Christ, there He calls you to a new life of faith & love,
that believes His judgment upon you, not of condemnation and eternal shame,
but His declaration of righteousness, innocence and eternal blessedness.

And just as we saw in the **burning of the House of God** in Zedekiah's day,
a picture of the Lord's **dwelling place,** as a picture of Jesus Christ.
And just as we saw the **house of the Lord that He had made holy in Jerusalem**

and a sanctuary for His people,
was an image of the holy body of Jesus, the incarnate Son of God, by which you are made holy…
So also we see a promise in the 70 years of sabbath/rest given to the land from all the evil that defiled it.
Jesus' death cleanses you and gives you rest, cleansing your conscience of what defiles it,
and giving hope and eager anticipation for the new world to come,
a recreated world, a heavenly Jerusalem, without corruption for you to enjoy for all eternity.

In Jesus' name. **Amen**.

Soli Deo Gloria