

Luke 19:41-48 Sermon Script | Trinity 10, 8/28/11 -- Ascension, Batavia

GRACE AND PEACE TO YOU, THROUGH GOD OUR FATHER, AND OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

THE LORD HAS VISITED HIS TEMPLE

– *IN JESUS NAME* –

In Malachi 3, we read in our Scripture reading: (**Malachi 3:1**). Could we here in our text be seeing the exact fulfillment of Malachi's prophecy? Remember, Malachi was the last inspired writing of the Old Testament. Just 400 years prior to Jesus' birth, this prophecy was written: "The Lord whom you seek, will come suddenly!"

And yet Malachi goes on to speak of this Messenger of the covenant purging the sons of Levi— speaking of you the royal priesthood of believers. This Messenger will purify them, so that they can offer acceptable sacrifices – "an offering in righteousness." Yes, Jesus ran the money changers out of the Temple of Jerusalem. But He was only addressing a smaller symptom to a larger disease. His visiting the Temple was not just to end the corruption that was occurring within Israel in His day, He came to put an end to all corruption, all impurity, He has come (cf. **Malachi 3:2,3,4**) "**like a refiner's fire...**" The Lord has visited His Temple, just as Malachi prophesied and just as Jesus Himself says, **v.44**.

1. He WEEPS

We find Jesus at the beginning of our account approaching Jerusalem. This falls on the heels of the Palm Sunday account, where we find Jesus finding toward Jerusalem, lowly, sitting upon a donkey. Jesus has just received praises and palms: "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD." Yet as He descends the Mount of Olives toward the Kidron Valley and sees Jerusalem set on the hill just ahead – He weeps.

Jesus knows how short lived this praise will be. He knows what dramatic events are about to unfold. He knows that in six days He will be crucified. **v.42**. All of the prophecies, all of God's careful protection of this nation, all the events that have taken place thus far in the history of Israel have led to this point. And Jesus weeps. "**in this your day**" He says. He weeps bitter tears of bitter sorrow, knowing that this people, His people, the ones who have been brought through 1500 years of God's planning as a chosen nation, will put their Messenger of the Covenant to death.

The very work He has set out to do that so many hate and reject, was actually accomplishing peace. "**The things that make for your peace.**" The Lord has visited His Temple. The one Malachi calls "the Messenger of the Covenant" came to visit His Temple, to purify His people. To bring to the world the sacrifice needed to pay for sin.

He weeps when He sees those He came to save count His visitation a common thing. As Jesus said in Matt. 23:37 – "**O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your**

children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!

What more could be done? The Lord visited His Temple, laid down all rights, powers, and privileges, and sacrificed Himself for you. **v.44, “you did not know...”** It truly hurts God to see those he came to save reject Him.

He weeps because He knows the end of this unrepentant attitude. **v.43,44.** Think of “visitation” as the time when the LORD manifestly enters history. In our context, “the time of our visitation” is the most basically, the incarnation of our God — God entering history — God visiting us with His salvation — accomplishing and making known the good news of peace between God and man.

He weeps because He knows they do not hear His cry. Jerusalem will be destroyed for its rejection of the Messiah. The Roman armies will surround her, press in upon every side. Some 40 years after this Jesus uttered these words, under the Roman general Titus, Rome besieged and destroyed Jerusalem. According to the historian Josephus, over a million died and some 97000 were carried off captive.

He weeps, because they do not hear His cry. Yet He weeps even more that so many do not hear a much greater warning. Jerusalem was only a foreshadowing of a much greater destruction for all who do not believe. But this is no cruel torture Christ imposes on us, nor is it something over which He rejoices. He weeps. He rebukes. He rebukes in order to cause deaf ears to wake up and see the grace of our God.

2. He REBUKES

Malachi prophesied: **Mal. 3:1.** As prophesied, Jesus comes suddenly to the temple in Jerusalem, and rebukes. He rebukes the vendors and money changers for what they were doing. The greatest rebuke is not so much in what they were doing. But where they were doing it and perhaps how they were doing it. It was necessary for those traveling from a distance to have a source to buy or trade for animals, so they would have something to sacrifice. The Passover was near, so many Jews from a distance had traveled to the Temple to sacrifice and worship. They could not all bring a sheep from home.

The vendors were not at fault because of what they were doing, but because of where they were doing it. These were buying and selling within the Temple itself. The place where Jesus finds them was the courtyard reserved for the Gentiles to worship. The Gentiles (non-Jews) were not allowed to go into the inner court where the Jews assembled for worship. To them was designated “the court of the Gentiles.”

Try to imagine, as a Gentile, going to church where there is money being exchanged, clinking of coins, animals coming and going, sheep, goats, pigeons. – the smells? – and the noise? Jesus rebukes these because they had taken away this place of

worship in order to do business and make money. And ultimately the religious leaders are at fault, since they would be the ones in charge of this decision.

v.46. If you would look back to Isaiah you would see the passage to which Jesus is referring. In Isaiah 56:7 we read: **Isaiah 56:7–8 – Even them I will bring to My holy mountain, And make them joyful in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices Will be accepted on My altar; For My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations.**” The emphasis of Isaiah’s context is that God will reach out to the Gentiles with His message of salvation. **“A house of prayer for all nations.”** Jesus rebukes for taking away the Gentile’s place of worship.

So when we read, **“but you have made it a den of thieves,”** Could Jesus be referring to the fact that the religious leaders, by letting this go on, were “stealing” away the Gentiles need to worship? Could He be referring to the Gentiles being deprived of their place of worship in the Temple. Were these religious leaders being thieves of other men’s spiritual goods. The Lord has visited His Temple, rebuking the false religious practices of His people. For it was Malachi who went on to say, **Malachi 3:8.**

And does He have reason to do the same today? Is there anything I do that might steal away from another person’s ability to worship. Maybe its not animals, or exchanging money in church, but maybe there are other distractions I cause that could be avoided. Maybe I get hung up visiting before church and don’t take enough time to meditate before worship begins? Maybe I haven’t prepared enough for the service and it becomes distracting when I slip up? Maybe I don’t have everything spelled out well enough in the worship folder or I confuse people with too many changes in the liturgy? Maybe I should print out more of the liturgy for visitors to follow? Sometimes I get so used to something that I never realize how it might affect someone who is newer or not used to our practices and traditions.

But perhaps there is another way we might fall into the same guilt as those in Jesus’ day? Maybe we are being warned not to use too many gimmicks or worldly attractions to make it easier to get people in the door? I am sure having the money changers and the animal vendors in the temple court was more convenient for travelers and visitors. Perhaps it was considered an outreach effort – make things easier and more appealing. In and out, you could get your goat, have your sacrifice, and be home the next day. Although such attractions can get people in the door, it doesn’t build a proper foundation. Jesus went on to teach daily in the temple. We too should be focused on the same – to teach daily the Word of God, without distractions – to give the proper foundation.

“My house is a house of prayer for all nations.” The purpose of church is to know, as v. 42 says, the things that make for your peace.” That is what the LORD’s temple is all about, it is about God sharing His peace with His people. **Luke 10:5 – But whatever house you enter, first say, ‘Peace to this house.’** The Lord has visited His temple. He weeps, He rebukes, and finally, He restores.

3. He RESTORES

Why would Jesus care so much about this Temple that was about to be destroyed in 40 years? Was His primary concern with restoring the Gentile's worship in this outer court in this Temple? **Acts 7:48–49** – “**However, the Most High does not dwell in temples made with hands, as the prophet says: ‘Heaven is My throne, And earth is My footstool. What house will you build for Me? says the Lord, Or what is the place of My rest?**”

The Lord visiting His Temple in the year AD 30 was not the ultimate fulfillment of Malachi's prophecy. Cf. **Mal. 3:1-3**. The ultimate fulfillment of Malachi's prophecy is spiritual in nature – “**an offering in righteousness**”. It is more than Christ's physical appearance in the Temple of Jerusalem, it was Christ's spiritual restoration of a spiritual Temple. The Temple of God is nothing more than the place where God dwells with His people. It is not these four walls. It is the people within these walls.

John 4:21,3 The hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father .. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.

Malachi addresses a people who have lost the true worship of God. He addresses a people who are stealing away the truth of the gospel from those who need it. As we said earlier, those whom the Lord drives out of the temple were only a symptom of the greater disease. The greater disease comes when the spiritual Temple of God was being destroyed. When worldly distractions and work righteousness take the place of true spiritual worship. The Father is seeking those who will worship Him in spirit and in truth, who “**make an offering in righteousness, purified by the blood of Christ**”. You are a result of this restoration of the LORD's temple. He has caused you by grace to know the time of His visitation.

This restoration is also why we find Jesus continuing to “teach daily in the Temple.” So also He is daily teaching in His spiritual Temple – your heart. He is daily visiting you through His word. He is daily restoring you, every time you open up the Bible or gather with fellow Christians around the Word. As 2 Corinthians says, **2 Corinthians 6:16** – ... **you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: “I will dwell in them And walk among them. I will be their God, And they shall be My people.”**

v.48 reads in one translation, “and they were hanging on His every word.” So also Jesus is daily in the temple of your heart teaching. He weeps when we fall, rebukes us when we sin, and restores us through forgiveness; *let us hang on His every word* – for the Lord has visited His Temple. Amen.