

Peace

(Luke 19: 41 - 44)

We have just heard from the gospel passage from Luke that Jesus was descending from the Mount of Olives. From the Mount there was a magnificent view of Jerusalem in which the city lies fully displayed to the sight.

I want you to imagine Jesus descending from the Mount of Olives as He sees Jerusalem displayed before Him in all its splendour, yet rather than expressing enthusiasm for what He sees Luke tells us that as Jesus approached the city He stopped and wept over it. Jesus knew that all of this splendour would one day become a burnt out shell.

The Jews were then embarking upon a career of political maneuvers and intrigue that ended up in the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. The tragedy was if only they had abandoned their dreams of political power and had taken the way of Christ, it need never have happened.

Jesus' tears as He stood there on the Mount, were the tears of God when He sees the needless pain and suffering in which men involve themselves through their foolish rebellion against God's will. And Jesus says "If you, even you - had only recognized on this day the things that make for peace ! But now they are hidden from your eyes".

By listening to God - by taking the way of Christ, senseless tragedy, destruction & unrest could have been avoided and there could have been peace.

All over the world today people are rebelling against authority, law and order. Richard Wurmbrand wrote " When men or women have no faith in the reward of good - or the punishment when we do evil, there is no reason to be human, there is no restraint on the depth of evil which is in man.

In our world today are we suffering from lack of God-consciousness and moral restraint? If we watch the news keep up with the media, this does seem to be. We hear of violence, war, stealing, mugging, corruption and sexual immorality, recently I read of a child of 6 being sacrificed in England, and just his torso being found in a ditch.

In many ways there seems to be little or know God-framework and many feel they can just do as they wish.

When Christ looks down on this world today - as He did that day over Jerusalem do you think He would weep?

Given what I have just said, yes I think He is weeping... Jesus is grieved that so many in 2003 do not know the things that make for peace.

The biblical witness declares our peace with God was won by the redemptive love of Jesus. He came into this world to seek out and save the lost to bring His peace to every man, women and child. He lived in a sinful lost world. And in the end it was not HE who rejected us because of our faults and failings. But WE rejected Him the Prince of Peace.

He died for our sins, so that we can be forgiven and healed. By His life, death and resurrection, Jesus provided the way for every succeeding generation to enter into a rich and personal relationship with the Father, the Holy Spirit and with Himself our Saviour and Redeemer.

Jesus left us with the Holy Spirit who is now the source and dispenser of the peace which the world cannot give. True peace cannot come from non-peaceful sources. God is the fountainhead of peace. We cannot expect to find peace in a turbulent world until we make peace with the God of peace through Jesus Christ. Peace with God is finding harmony with God and that we cannot do on our own. We must reconcile ourselves to God by asking Christ to forgive us our sins and make us clean in God's sight.

Peace is the very essence of the kingdom that Jesus established. As followers of Jesus we are called to peace. (Colossians 3:15) Paul writes.. " Christ's peace must reign in your hearts, since as members of the one body you have been called to that peace". And this peace which we have received we need to share with others. This peace can help us rid ourselves of grudges, anger and ill towards others.

Paul again in his letter too the Ephesians writes 'Make every effort to preserve the unity which the Spirit as its origin, and peace as its binding force. As peace reigns in our hearts, our peaceful radiance will draw others into that bond of peace.

Peace is a sign of the presence of God, and where God is there is love. The Holy Spirit is a source of the divine love and as we let the Holy Spirit mold and transform us we

can become radiant with the peace only He can give.

When sin enters through greed, control, anger, mis -use of the scripture, it fragments relationships, communities and churches. Sin is divisive, damaging disruptive and destructive.

How can we know the peace Jesus refers to in the gospel reading today?

Peace flows from good relationships. But firstly we need to be at peace with God by keeping our wills in tune with the will of our Loving Father. We cannot know the Father unless we listen to Him. To know God experientially and to be aware of His abiding love, we must regularly spend time with Him, basking in His presence and prayerfully listening to Him with all our heart. Only meeting the Lord each day in prayer will we get to know Him as a loving gracious God and only then will we establish that personal relationship with Him, that will keep our will in tune with our loving Father.

We need to be at peace with others by respecting them as our brothers and sisters in Christ. We all have a common Father in heaven - that makes us a special family. Jesus loves us so much that if we ask - He shares His divine life with us. John 17:21 Jesus says I pray that all may be one, as you the Father are in me, and I in you; I pray that all may be one in us, that the world will believe you sent me.

Jesus prays that we may love enough to allow Him to establish that same bond of love between all the members of His family.

We must be at peace with ourselves. Accepting who we are - with our gifts and talents our shortcomings and our limitations, our faults and our failures. We need to be happy with who we are because God loves you and me the way we are. When our hearts and minds are at peace with God, our response will reflect His love, joy and peace. Then we can find the peace this world cannot give to us.

Edith Humphrey : writes.. True shalom includes a state where there is no disruption in communion between God, humanity, male and female, people and people, and in which every person has in proper balance the Spirit, mind, heart, and bodily functions. Despite this vision of a fulfilled and reconciled cosmos, the Bible is frank about our situation. The shalom of God has been disturbed, and requires restoration. Moreover,

God, in His love, wants to take us beyond the restoration of the original image of the divine, so that we might participate in His very nature. To this end, God the Son has assumed human flesh. What will the recovery of original justice and the ultimate glorification of humanity mean? It will mean bringing together of heart, spirit, mind and will, and the reconciliation of all under the Lordship of Christ.

Jesus came into this world as the Prince of Peace. Jesus brings peace to us by teaching us to call God my Father. Knowing that we are accepted by the Father is the source of peace. Jesus furthermore promised us the Holy Spirit who would a temple with each one of us, and one of the fruits of the Spirit is peace.

When Jesus called us to be His disciple's, He did not promise us lives strewn with fragrant roses. On the contrary through His life He warned us of misunderstanding, persecution and suffering. But mysteriously discipleship will bring joy and peace, because Jesus promised in John 16: 33: "I have said this to you, so that in me you may have peace.

Lord, guide our feet into the way of peace and give us the courage and strength to commit ourselves wholeheartedly to that way each day.

Amen.