

"Tears, Shame, and Peace" Jeremiah 8:4-12; Luke 19:41-48 Trinity 10
2022

The grace, mercy, and peace of Christ Jesus rest upon each one of you this day.

Folks, God is NOT okay with sin. I know that this isn't ground-breaking news to any of you. Of course, God's not okay with sin. If there was any doubt, our lessons for today make this abundantly clear. We know the history. We understand why Jesus weeps on that Palm Sunday. We understand why God expresses so much anger to Old Testament Israel. All of these people—both Old and New Testament—rejected God and His Word. They all wanted salvation on their terms. They all wanted to do their thing, and they weren't going to be told differently. Such thick-skulled, hard-hearted unbelief never turns out well, does it?

As straightforward as this all is, there is one point I would like to single out and focus on for today. Speaking through Jeremiah, God goes on to tell these unrepentant people that they've gone so far off the deep end in their sin that they are no longer embarrassed by their sin. Adam and Eve were ashamed of their nakedness. They at least tried to cover up their sin. Not these folks though. In fact, they were proud of who they were and what they did.

Now, I know it's easy to look at all of this and shake our heads in disgust and dismay. No wonder God was so angry! But what about us? If I were to say that we are no longer ashamed of our sin, I think everyone here would agree...to a point. Culturally, there's no denying the fact that we no are longer ashamed of our sin. As a nation, we're no longer ashamed of our sins. Instead, we celebrate it. Homosexuality? Celebrated. Abortion? Celebrated. Ignoring the plight of the poor and marginalized? Celebrated. Promoting hate against Christians? Celebrated. I understand why Jesus wept.

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What about rejecting Christ and His Word? I know that sounds crazy to our ears because what faithful Christian would ever reject Christ...but hear me out. Here [Word and Sacrament] are the things that make for peace. Here is God's peace, right here and right now. Are these means of grace rejected and despised? Is this peace of God rejected and despised by "good" Christians? All the time! This is what makes it so maddening to Christians who believe what God says about these things. God's peace and redemption, given so freely and fully in the waters of Holy Baptism; given so freely and fully in His own Body and Blood (just like He so clearly says), and self-professed "good" Christians willfully plug their ears and turn their backs on it all. The fish are biting. The pool is calling. The cottage is too inviting. It's too hot. It's too cold. It's too rainy to go outside. It's too nice to be inside. What's most distressing is that people don't even feel ashamed when they say such things. I understand why Jesus wept. I understand why God was angry.

Those close to us turn their backs on this tangible peace of Christ, and we get angry if someone dares to call it what it is—rejection of Christ. Instead of admonishing such foolishness, we take it upon ourselves to pronounce peace and blessing upon such disobedience, as if God Himself is perfectly fine with it. "Hey, we all love Jesus. It doesn't matter where you go. Jesus knows you love Him. Really?! Here is Christ, right? You say you believe it. I want you to imagine Jesus' response to this foolishness. "Yeah, Jesus, I love you, and even though this is where you give me your body and blood (like you say), but I have things to do on Sunday morning." Doesn't this foolishness make you angry? Doesn't it make you ashamed...even a little? It should.

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Here [the crucifix] is the divine wrath of God against all sin, and believe it or not, it is here in this divine and righteous anger of God that we, through faith, are able to recognize His Gospel love for us. Here is where God pours out all His wrath and punishment against sin—here, on Christ Jesus...not on you. Here is the One who has paid for each and every one of your sins on His cross, who died and rose again for you in order that you might have His gift of eternal life, and have it in overflowing abundance. This alone should make you hit your knees in repentant thankfulness and weep tears of joy! Here is the peace of God; the peace that surpasses all human understanding.

And the greatest thing of all is that none of this is hidden or done in secret. God wants nothing more than for everyone to partake and receive His free gifts of grace, mercy, and peace. He holds out these gifts constantly to all people, inviting everyone who is weak and wearied; everyone who labours under the yoke and bondage of sin, to come to Him and be yoked to Him and His righteousness and His peace, "for My yoke is easy and My burden is light." If only people would recognize and clamour for the things that make for true peace!

Now, I'm not going to end by giving you some false hope that by simply having faith in God life will now be easy and cross-free. I say this because many a person does wind up rejecting the peace of God because they didn't find the version of peace they were looking for in their daily lives. They stopped having "fun." The bills kept coming. The sickness only got worse. The loved one didn't get better. The marriage still failed. Friendships were fractured and families were split because of the divisive nature of the cross. The unrest and lack of peace in their lives tempt them and cause them to reject the peace of God. It's sad, but some people prefer the false and fleeting peace of the world. It's just easier. I understand why Jesus wept.

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Folks: Here is the peace that surpasses all understanding. I know it doesn't look like much, but richer or poorer, in sickness and in health, in good times and in bad times and everything in between, here is the peace of Christ, freely held out to you. "I am with you ALWAYS." No matter how bad life in this fallen and sinful world may get, we belong to Christ. Nothing and no one can ever snatch that away. No man can rent asunder the love that Christ has for us. Hold fast to Christ, and you will have peace. In His holy name...AMEN