"Jerusalem, Jerusalem" -- Luke 13:34-35

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church
Emmett, Idaho
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Reminiscere - The Second Sunday in Lent
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Dear Baptized,

We don't hear the words spoken too often in the Scriptures but when we do it is a time of critical importance and the words express a true concern or deep emotion. The repeating of the proper name conveys a meaning and applies to the immediate context. For example, when Moses turned aside to see the great sight, why the bush was not burnt, "God called to him out of the bush, ‘Moses, Moses!" (Exodus 3:4). Here the doubling of the word is meant to warn and to reveal. "Do not come near; put off your shoes from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground" (3:5).

"And the boy Samuel grew in the Presence of the LORD" (1 Samuel 2:21) and was lying down in the temple of the LORD, where the Ark of God was. Then the LORD called, ‘Samuel, Samuel'" (3:3-4). On this occasion the words to gain attention for the purpose of Samuel being a messenger and prophet of the Word. When she was too occupied serving and had no time for hearing the Word in Bible class, Jesus admonished her when He said, "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things; one thing is needful" (Luke 10:41).

Behold the son of David hung on a tree, his body pierced three times. These were wounds that cut him to the heart. Below him stood soldiers who surrounded him and struck him. Thus did he die and when the word of his death reached his father, King David cried out, "O my son, Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would that I had died instead of you, O Absalom, my son, my son!" (2 Samuel 18:35) Dear children, do you not hear the hurt and pain and sorrow. "O my son Absalom, O Absalom, my son, my son!" (19:4)?

This is the lament of Jesus the Christ as He looks back on, sees ahead to and beholds before Him - the City of David, the abandoned Temple and the Prophet-killing place. The Gospel Reading for this Sunday is the sermon text. Please listen to verses 34-35 under the theme ...

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem" ...

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, killing the prophets and stoning those who are sent to you! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not! Behold, your house is forsaken. And I tell you, you will not see Me until you say, ‘Blessed is He Who comes in the Name of the LORD!'"

Thus far the Word of the LORD our God.

Do you not hear the heart of God in these words recorded by the evangelist? The lament is an expression of the inmost desire recorded by the Prophet Ezekiel: "As I live, says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn

back, turn back from your evil ways; for why will you die, O house of Israel?" (Ezekiel 34:11). The groaning is echoed in the epistle of the Apostle Paul who writes that God: "desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:4).

This Divine expression of the same word twice is all the more amazing because of what Jesus says after them. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, killing the prophets and stoning those who are sent to you! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not!" God, in His mercy, earnestly desired not to render the judgment that the city deserved. Even though they had killed the prophets and even though they had stoned those who were sent to Jerusalem, the LORD God would still have gathered the children of the city. After centuries of such rejection of the Word and silencing of His Prophets, Jerusalem had the earned label of the place that killed the prophets and stoned the apostles. In fact, Jesus had just stated that "it cannot be that a prophet should perish away from Jerusalem" (Luke 13:33).

"How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not!" But did you notice that the day of grace had passed for the city? "How often would I have gathered." There comes a moment for the city that kills the prophets and stones the apostles, there come a season for a congregation that casts out faithful pastors and drives away orthodox teachers, there comes an instant for an individual who continuously rejects the Ministry of the Word and absents himself from the Sacraments ... there comes an hour when the time of repentance and salvation is passed. At that sudden second the Lord Jesus no longs visits in mercy, peace and grace, but His advent is one of judgment, dread and abandonment.

That which the city, a congregation or an individual seeks is suddenly realized. That is what happened at the synagogue in Nazareth when those in attendance rose up and forced Jesus out of their midst. They sought to rid themselves of Him and the result was that they no longer had Jesus among them and the Lord was no longer graciously present with them. Jerusalem, the City that kills the prophets, will compel Jesus the Prophet to go outside the gates of the holy city and to a cursed place where they will crucify Him. Thus they no longer have Him in the Holy City and their ears are no longer even able to hear the lament of "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem!"

The congregation that silences the Word by stilling and rejecting faithful pastors, or that abandons the Word by calling and listening to false shepherds will get what they seek. Though they gather and though they are religious and though they are zealous, they no longer have a faithful pastor to feed and nurture them on Word and Sacrament, and they now have a false pastor who is a wolf in shepherd's clothing. It does not seem that this is the situation here at Our Redeemer either with the congregation or her pastor, at least at this time. However, we - you and I - need to take heed that the congregation not depart from being the Bride of Christ - that the pastor not depart from feeding "the church of the Lord which He bought with His own Blood" (Acts 20:28). The frightening part of such a situation is this - those who depart don't even know that this is taking place and they are not even able to hear the Divine lament of "O congregation, congregation ... O pastor, pastor."

If that is possible to happen to the congregation and/or her pastor, it is certainly also capable of happening to a member of the congregation. The individual who, either through being careless, taking offence or expressing sinful pride, or just plain being lazy, silences the Lord by ignoring His Word and who neglects meeting together in the holy place where the Lord is graciously present with His people - will discover, either in this life or at the last Day, that he or she has not heard and does not have the Word of forgiveness and has no place at the Lord's banquet. "O LuWanda, LuWanda ...

O Michael, Michael ... O Fritz, Fritz!"

Now dear baptized, be assured that this is not the way Jesus wants either the city, the congregation or the individual to be. But if any one of them is impenitent then he, she or it will suffer the dreadful, Divine consequences. "How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not! Behold, your house is forsaken."

This is most significant because the Greek word for "forsaking or abandoning" is also the word for "forgiving or releasing." Both have to do with a leaving or separating. So with the Holy Trinity there will be a releasing of one sort or the other - there will either be the forgiveness of sins, or there will be the departure of God's merciful and gracious Presence.

Let this be a serious reflection for every Christian. Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit. You are in Christ and Christ is in you. Indeed, since the Father and the Son are also One, you have the indwelling of the Holy Trinity within. The only way this can be is if you have been released from your sins and your transgressions have been removed from you "as far as the east is from the west" (Psalm 103:12). This happened when you were baptized in His Name "for the ‘releasing' - for the forgiveness of your sins" (Acts 2:38). You remain the temple of God as you live in your baptismal grace by confessing your sins and hearing the Absolution - by hearing the Word of forgiveness announced and applied to you. Christ is graciously within you as you commune at His Table and feed on Him.

The LORD and your sin cannot abide together. Jesus bore it once when He died upon the cross. He does not bear being with it again. He says, "Either your sin is removed from you or I am. If I do not release you from your sin then I will not abide with you. I seek to have you with Me even as My Bride, the Church, seeks to keep you gathered under her wings." Dear friends, there is no salvation apart from Christ and no eternal life outside the Church, that is, the Body of Christ.

How sad and tragic it will be for those who have departed from the gracious presence as they seek to do their own thing apart from God and justify themselves because of their good works done without God. For then will come to pass what Jesus said, "On that Day many will say to Me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your Name, and cast out demons in Your Name, and do many mighty works in Your Name?' And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you evildoers'" (Matthew 7:22-23). In other words, "O impenitent, impenitent! Behold, you are forsaken!"

This same truth concerning the individual also applies to the congregation. Jesus wrote to warn the church in Ephesus as it teetered on the edge of unbelief as the congregation had abandoned the sacrificial love of the Lord. The consequences of the corporate failure to repent would be that Christ would no longer be with them. Jesus said it like this: "If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent" (Rev. 2:5).

A congregation that permits false doctrine to be taught and as a result, false practices to take place and even be promoted, will no longer be the holy place where people may enter into the gracious presence of God. For indeed, the LORD will depart from that place as He did centuries ago: "When you spread forth your hands, I will hide My eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I will not listen; yours hands are full of blood" (Isaiah 1:15). Thus far the Word of God given to and delivered by the Prophet Isaiah, a man sent by God to tell what he saw concerning Jerusalem and who is said to have been martyred by being sawn in two. Ah yes, "killing the prophets and stoning

those who are sent to you!" Pray that we may not depart from the Truth and thus, this house be forsaken by God.

For Jerusalem it was too late. The day of grace had passed. The LORD had departed from the Temple and from outside the city, the lamentation of Jesus is heard, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, killing the prophets and stoning those who are sent to you! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not! Behold, your house is forsaken. And I tell you, you will not see Me until you say, ‘Blessed is He Who comes in the Name of the LORD!'"

So yes, Jesus will return to Jerusalem. It will be on Palm Sunday as foretold by the Prophet Zechariah, "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Lo, your King comes to you" (9:9). So yes, Jesus will return to the Temple in Jerusalem one more time, when He leads the children in and they sing their hosannas to the LORD. But lo, He will wind through the streets of the city that kills the prophets one more time, when Jesus follows Simon of Cyrene. The LORD will turn to those women lamenting Him and will say to them, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children" (Luke 23:28).

Behold the Son of David hung on a tree, his body pierced three times. These were wounds that cut him to the heart. Below him stood soldiers who surrounded him and pierced Him. He is forsaken that you might not be abandoned by God. Do you not hear the repeating words from the mouth of Jesus? "'Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?' which means, ‘My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?'" (Mark 15:34). Amen.