

Christ's Love To Those Who Reject Him.

Text: Luke 19:41-48

1) A Fervent Love

Suggested Hymns:

2) A Sacred Love

186, 128, 305, 154, 191

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Luke 19:41-48, ⁴¹ *Now as He drew near, He saw the city and wept over it,* ⁴² *saying, "If you had known, even you, especially in this your day, the things that make for your peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes.*

⁴³ *For days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment around you, surround you and close you in on every side,* ⁴⁴ *and level you, and your children within you, to the ground; and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not know the time of your visitation."*

⁴⁵ *Then He went into the temple and began to drive out those who bought and sold in it,* ⁴⁶ *saying to them, "It is written, 'My house is a house of prayer,' but you have made it a 'den of thieves.'"*

⁴⁷ *And He was teaching daily in the temple. But the chief priests, the scribes, and the leaders of the people sought to destroy Him,* ⁴⁸ *and were unable to do anything; for all the people were very attentive to hear Him. (NKJV)*

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

One of the most remarkable features of our Gospel is the minute exactness with which Christ is foretelling the destruction of the city of Jerusalem.

Standing before the massive walls of that seemingly impregnable city, He utters the solemn prophecy: ⁴³ *For days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment around you, surround you and close you in on every side,* ⁴⁴ *and level you, and your children within you, to the ground; and they will*

not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not know the time of your visitation.” This prophecy of the Lord came true, every word of it.

About forty years after this remarkable prediction the Roman army, numbering some sixty thousand warriors and commanded by Titus, surrounded the city.

It was in the spring time of the year, and about one million two hundred thousand Jews were huddled together within the walls. Before the city was entirely encircled, before the belt of grim warriors around the city was closed, the Christians, remembering their Saviour’s dreadful prediction, left Jerusalem in a body and found a safe refuge at Pella, a mountain resort beyond the river Jordan.

Not a Christian was in the city during the siege, which lasted from the month of April to the tenth of August. During these dreadful months the Jews learned what it is to be surrounded and to be kept in on every side. The terrible agony and suffering, the distress of the inhabitants of the doomed city is beyond description.

The inhabitants were divided among themselves, and the different parties were waging war against each other while the enemy was at the gates. Penned up like sheep for the slaughter, they equally resembled wolves devouring one another. Dead bodies were rotting in the streets, causing a pestilence in which thousands perished.

In a very short time they were short of provisions, and a famine set in with all its ghastly terrors. Here men would fight even their dearest friends for the most miserable morsel of food.

The dead were thrown over the city walls, where they lay in great heaps in the ravines below. Titus, as he went his rounds, saw this sickening sight and the ground reeking with gore wherever he trod; he groaned, lifted up his hands to heaven, and called the gods to witness that this was not his work.

Time and again he had offered pardon to the inhabitants if they would only surrender the city; but they would not listen to him. So the siege was pressed more vigorously, the three massive walls, thirty-five feet high and thirty-five feet thick, were broken and scaled one after the other, and on the tenth day of August the entire city, including the last place of refuge, the temple, where many

thousands of underfed men, women, and children were huddled together, was in the hands of the conquerors.

Titus tried his best to save that magnificent structure, the temple; but he had no control over his soldiers. They were enraged because of the Jews' stubbornness. They set fire to the temple, mercilessly slaughtered their antagonists, and, in fact, did not leave one stone upon another, even digging up the ground and undermining the walls in their search for treasures, because a report had been circulated that the Jews had hidden their treasures there.

A Jewish writer, Josephus, who was an eye-witness and from whom we have a full account of this siege, says, "*The whole [place] was so thoroughly levelled and dug up that no one visiting it would believe that it ever had been inhabited.*" The number of deaths during the siege is estimated at one million one hundred thousand, and that of prisoners ninety-seven thousand.

We see, Christ's remarkable prediction concerning the destruction of Jerusalem was literally fulfilled, showing that He is the omniscient Son of God and the Lord in whose mouth no guile is found.

Still, there is something in our Gospel even more remarkable than this foretelling of the siege of Jerusalem. It is Christ's fervent and sacred love to the blinded people who despised and rejected their own Messiah.

Let us apply our attention to this important truth, considering, with the help of God's Holy Spirit, *Christ's Love To Those Who Reject Him*. May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. A Fervent Love

It was Christ's last journey to Jerusalem. Approaching the city from the East with His disciples, He had reached the crest of those hills extending from North to South and going by the name of Mount of Olives.

Descending the slope their eyes meet with a beautiful sight. Before them lies the holy city of Jerusalem. There are the snow-white walls, encircling, as if with a girdle, the thousands of dwellings closely built together. There are the stately palaces of the rich with their surrounding gardens, standing forth as gems in the sea of houses.

There is the temple, that magnificent structure, which at that time, there was not another building in the whole world more grand and imposing. It towered above all the other buildings, and its shining pinnacles glistened and flashed in the sun.

It was a picture of tranquillity and peace, of strength and security, of wealth and luxury that presented itself to the eyes of the Lord and His disciples when He stood in a sad mood and gazed at the capital city of the Jews.

We are not told what the disciples said and did when they saw the city, whether they showed demonstrations of joy, or not. But, most likely, they could not constrain themselves; most likely they did what all the devout Jews did when, coming from a distance, they would see the holy city with its sanctuary, the pride of the land, and the dwelling-place of the Lord God of Israel: most likely they burst forth with shouts of joy and praise.

Thoughts of an altogether different nature crossed the mind of Jesus while He stood gazing at the city. This outward splendour and magnificence did not move Him. He knew the true character of the inhabitants. He knew that behind those massive walls and within those beautiful palaces dwelt a nation that was doomed on account of its persistent disobedience, a nation that had rejected its Messiah, a nation that would murder its own Saviour.

He knew that the high priests, the elders of the people, the scribes, and Pharisees were, at this very moment, planning His death, and that within a few days the people would stand before Pilate's judgement hall shouting until they were hoarse, "***Crucify Him! Crucify Him!***"

He knew that the entire nation would call down upon itself the curse and vengeance of the Almighty,¹ and that such dire vengeance would come in a very short time crushing them, never to rise again.

We are told, "***If you had known, even you, especially in this your day, the things that make for your peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes.***"

Christ is weeping over Jerusalem, weeping over those obstinate, stubborn inhabitants who rejected Him and would not believe in Him as their Messiah and Saviour! O what love, what fervent love to this people, dwells in the heart of Jesus who is shedding these tears!

These are not tears of anger. Christ does not weep as a child will sometimes cry and weep, because it cannot have its own way. Rather His tears are tears of extreme sorrow, sorrow because, as He says, they did not know the things that make for their peace, and because they were hid from their eyes.

He is sorry for them because of their blindness in not receiving and accepting Him who came to seek and to save, and thereby plunging themselves into the gulf of perdition.

For He says, ⁴³ ***For days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment around you, surround you and close you in on every side, ⁴⁴ and level you, and your children within you, to the ground; and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not know the time of your visitation.***”

His tears, then, were, at the same time, tears of condolence and sympathy, because He knew of the terrible judgements that were to come upon the city, and its inhabitants, and the whole nation.

Christ did not feel as though He could rejoice because these vile enemies of His would receive their just deserts and their due reward for slighting, rebuking, rejecting, and killing Him.

No; He wept bitter tears because He knew that they would have to suffer for it so terribly, when Jerusalem would be destroyed, and the nation would be deprived of its land, and scattered throughout the world, to wander about as a nation, without a land, to the end of the world.

O what love, what fervent love, must dwell in the heart of Jesus who weeps for those who despise Him! We cannot comprehend, we cannot understand it.

That Jesus would love those sinners who repent of their sins and receive Him as their divine Saviour, this we can understand. But who can comprehend this, that Jesus would love even those who reject Him, continually reject and despise Him, as did the majority of Jerusalem's inhabitants, and, together with them, are finally lost, eternally lost?

Let us never forget this: even the vilest scoffer and blasphemer is an object of Jesus' fervent love. Never is a person lost because Christ did not love him, did not care for him, did not wish to save him. Christ loves all people and wants

to save all people, and has shed His precious blood on the cross, and has redeemed all without any distinction or exception.

Yes, and if anyone has committed the most heinous crimes, and uttered the vilest blasphemies, and perpetrated the most wicked deeds, and weltered in the slums of vice and loathsome sins; if he would be so degraded that nobody will have anything to do with him, yet there is one heart who loves him, loves him fervently, longs for him and for his soul's salvation, and that is the heart of Jesus.

2. A Sacred Love.

It is, however, not only a fervent, but also a sacred love which Jesus bears in His heart toward those who reject Him. In the second part of our text we read, *“⁴⁵ Then He went into the temple and began to drive out those who bought and sold in it, ⁴⁶ saying to them, “It is written, ‘My house is a house of prayer,’ but you have made it a ‘den of thieves.’”*

Now what is the importance of this? What does Christ mean by cleansing the temple of those who profaned that holy place and made it a den of thieves by their fraudulent bargaining?

He shows by this act that His love to those who reject Him is, at the same time, a sacred love. His love could not bear to see the temple being turned into a den of thieves by the frauds in the sales, by false teaching, and by the substitution of human traditions for the holy Word of God. He therefore cleansed and purified the temple of all such wickedness and profanity. The sacredness of His love urged Him to do this.

Let no one think, then, that Christ is indifferent as to the sins, and evil-doings, and blasphemies of those who reject Him. Let no one think that Christ's fervent love could be a source of comfort to him as long as he indulges in his sins, rejects his Saviour and Redeemer, and does not know the time of his visitation.

Far from it. His love is sacred. He loves the sinner, but He hates sin. Every sin is an abomination to Him.

It is not for this reason that Jesus loves the evil-doer who despises and rejects His Lord and Saviour, because the evil-doer turns his back on Him and does not

want to be saved, but rather because he has an immortal soul which is capable of eternal salvation and which Jesus longs to save.

Indeed, His love to those who reject Him would not be true love, if it were not a sacred love. It would not be true love to permit the evil-doer to remain in the path that leads to eternal damnation, and not to warn and urge him to leave the broad way of sin and iniquity, and to tread the narrow way that leads to eternal life.

See, then, this is the reason why the Lord will sometimes severely attack those who reject Him, as He punished those vendors in the temple. His object and aim is to turn them from their wickedness and to induce them to seek the Lord, their God.

Christ's love, however, is a sacred love not only inasmuch as it is in itself holy and cannot bear profanity and sin, but also inasmuch as it sanctifies, or makes holy.

We read, *“⁴⁷ And He was teaching daily in the temple. But the chief priests, the scribes, and the leaders of the people sought to destroy Him, ⁴⁸ and were unable to do anything; for all the people were very attentive to hear Him.”*

What was the purpose of the Lord's preaching in the temple? He desired to change the hearts of those who rejected Him and did not want to receive Him as their Messiah.

In those days Jesus made His last attempt to reach their hearts and to convert them. But what was the result? There were two classes of people before Him. The one class were the chief priests, and scribes, and elders of the people. These became only the more hardened when they heard the words of Christ. They sought to destroy Him.

The other class were the common people. Even of these there were only a few who remained steadfast in the faith, but we are told that they were very attentive to hear Him.

To this day the preaching of the Gospel to those who reject Christ is followed with the same result. The Lord loves them all, and desires to save them all, and wishes to sanctify them all in His love.

He extends to them the forgiveness of all their sins, of their stubbornness, hard-heartedness, and blasphemies. But what is being done? Some, like the chief priests and scribes of old, remain in their sins in spite of all the appeals made before them to believe in Christ and to amend their sinful lives.

Yes, they become the more obstinate and opposed to the saving Gospel. Others, like the common people in our text, are attentive to hear, but even of these there are comparatively few that attain to, and remain in, the faith.

May our dear Lord's fervent and sacred love to those who reject Him induce us all to lament our sins and to cling to Him who is our only help! Let us be mindful of the time of our visitation, and not receive His grace in vain. Let us endure in the faith until the end, until we meet Him face to face, And sing to Him eternal praise. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ Matthew 27:25