

Ninth Sunday after Pentecost (8/2/20)

Jesus weeps over the city. He weeps over a place he loved, he weeps over the people he loves - the people he has called to be his own - who have set themselves to ruin. He laments that if they had only known then their fate would be different. He says elsewhere that if they had known they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory. But there is a blindness there. Despite the presence of the temple, despite the pilgrims streaming to religious services, despite the many crowds that encircled him, despite those crowds that on one day greeted him triumphantly upon his entrance to the city - they are blind. What has caused this blindness? What has caused the great calamity that he foresees? What sight do we need to have to avoid such a calamity?

The city of Jerusalem symbolizes God's special place, the people symbolize the people of the covenant. As God made covenant with the ancient Hebrews - with Noah, with Abraham, with David - he has in his Son established a new and lasting covenant. One that provides the ark of the Church to save from death (as the ark of Noah was provided by God), a covenant that completes the promise to Abraham to give a special homeland as he opens for us the kingdom of heaven as the new promised land, a covenant that sees in the Son the dependent of David who will rule forever in that kingdom above and on Earth below. Are we true people of that covenant? Are we aware of the presence of the King and do we follow his edicts and give him the fealty that is His due. If not we are like the people of Jerusalem who wander about doing their daily business, making the house of God a den of thieves by our lack of devotion in our weekly lives, or the selfishness or impurity of our prayer. Such an existence brings with it a destruction that he foretells, the city being beset with enemies - over run and desolated.

But it does not have to be the case. We can renew our devotion, we can refocus our action and attention to the things of the Lord, we can bring into our daily lives the presence of God, the reliance of God as our leader and savior. Then as the enemies come - be these temptations from the evil one, or the attacks of other people - we will be strengthened by the Lord who will be at our side. How can we do this? First is to be sure to raise the mind often to God in daily life. Second is from that raised awareness, to turn to the Lord often in prayer, and seek the Lord's will over our own, to trust in the Lord to intervene. Third is to avoid the behaviors that separate us from God and bring the enemy closer. In the Epistle Paul speaks of many of these

things: he speaks of idolatry, sexual sin, murmuring and complaining, and relying on our own powers over God. These will fall he says. When we call on one hand for the Lord to come near, and also call upon the enemy to come near on the other side - are we surprised that we get caught in the crossfire. It is a difficult things to continue to purify our devotion, and to purify our way of life. But these things succeed in building the strong wall over the city with God himself as the guard as He promises. God always fulfills His promises as he did in Jesus Christ where all is fulfilled.

As you enter this project of increased devotion and purification remember the Lord is there to assist. The sacraments provide indispensable aids and graces to accomplish what we cannot do on our own. Reconciliation beats the enemy back and placers us back in the ranks of the army of the true King, Eucharist provides us the food we need, adds armor to us for the fight, and brings Jesus so close and near. How privileged we are that the author of the universe comes to us in such an intimate way and protects us from the worst of the temptation and advances of the enemy. As St. Paul tells us, we will not be tempted beyond our ability - we will be able to bear it in Jesus Christ our Lord. This is the same Lord who is the King of the City in which we should be seeking to dwell, the captain of the guard, and the shepherd who leads us from His earthly city to the promised Kingdom where the fight has already been one, and God is all in all.