

2nd Sunday of Lent
17.3.19 – Medstead 11.00am

Jesus' Sorrow over Jerusalem

Genesis 17. 1-7, 15-16

Romans 4.13-end

Luke 13. 31-end

³¹ At that time some Pharisees came to Jesus and said to him, 'Leave this place and go somewhere else. Herod wants to kill you.'

³² He replied, 'Go and tell that fox, "I will keep on driving out demons and healing people today and tomorrow, and on the third day I will reach my goal."

³³ In any case, I must press on today and tomorrow and the next day – for surely no prophet can die outside Jerusalem!

³⁴ 'Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing.

³⁵ Look, your house is left to you desolate. I tell you, you will not see me again until you

say, "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord."

Let us pray.

*Lord Jesus, you once wept over the city of Jerusalem, out of love for the people there. Help us to have a heart of compassion for those who live in the Holy Land. And help us now, to learn from your Holy Word.
In the name ...*

I have been to Jerusalem a few times now, and very nearly lived there once.

It is the most extraordinary place on earth. There is no other city like it.

Nothing can quite prepare you for the intensity of the place.

It's busy streets, traffic, the heat of the day, people of all nationalities and religions staying in its 9,000 hotels, teenage Israeli soldiers with guns, randomly stopping you and asking for your papers.

And then the Old City – a maze of tiny streets, tourists, the smells of spices, orthodox Jews brushing past devout Muslims, Christian pilgrims, souvenirs.

To stand on the Mount of Olives and look across the valley where there are 150,000 Jewish graves that date as far back as 15th century, and then past the Garden of Gethsemane and up to the city walls and the al-Aqsa Mosque, with its golden beauty, can leave you completely speechless.

As Benjamin Disraeli once said:

The view of Jerusalem is the history of the world; it is more; it is the history of heaven and earth.

Jerusalem has a way of disappointing and tormenting its visitors.

The contrast between the real and heavenly cities is so vast that a hundred patients a year are committed to the city's mental hospitals, suffering from what is known as Jerusalem Syndrome, a madness of anticipation, disappointment and delusion.

Sometimes tourists afflicted with it have been found wandering in the Judean desert wrapped in hotel bed sheets or camped in front of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, convinced they are the messiah.

Jerusalem can send people insane!

In its 5,000 years of recorded human history there have been 180 conflicts around the city.

It has been conquered 44 times, and completely destroyed twice. And war still shapes the geography of Jerusalem.

The Old City of Jerusalem is less than one square mile - yet it has over 2,000 important sites and monuments and is sacred to the world's Jews, Muslims and Christians.

It is the home of Western Wall, the Temple Mount, Dome of the Rock and the Al-Aqsa Mosque, Church of the Holy Sepulcher and the Via Dolorosa, among others.

Steeped in antiquity, Jerusalem exists as a uniquely *Holy City* to the world's three major

monotheistic faiths, or faiths that believe in one God – Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

For Christians, who number about 14,000, or 2% of Jerusalem's population, the city is the site of the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus.

The Church of the Holy Sepulchre and the Garden Tomb, mark the sites of Jesus's resurrection, and attract worshippers from around the world.

For Jews, who comprise 62% of the population, Jerusalem is the holiest city in the world. It is the capital of the ancient Israelite kingdom and the former location of the Jewish temples.

For Muslims, who make up more than a third of Jerusalem's population, the city is one of Islam's holiest sites, after Mecca and Medina.

The Foundation Stone the temple was built over bears great significance in Judaism as the place where God created the world and the first human, Adam.

It is also believed to be the site where Abraham attempted to sacrifice his son, and as the place where God's divine presence is manifested more than in any other place, towards which Jews turn during prayer.

The site's great significance for Muslims derives from traditions connecting it to the creation of the world and the belief that the Prophet Muhammad's Night Journey to heaven started from the rock at the center of the structure.

Muslims believe that the Prophet Muhammad was transported from Mecca to Jerusalem during his Night Journey to heaven.

A song by an old friend of mine has the lines:

*Ten measures of beauty God gave to the world,
Nine for Jerusalem , one for the rest;
Ten measures of sorrow, God gave to the world,
Nine for Jerusalem, one for the rest.*

*So pray for the peace, pray for the peace,
Pray for the peace of Jerusalem.*

The words are ancient. In fact they come from the Babylonian Talmud, written before the 8th century but it has its roots in the Old Testament.

And Jerusalem is a place of sorrow – especially today, as it is occupied and fragmented by the Israelis.

In Luke 19:41, we are told that *“And when Jesus was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it...”*

The scene is a sad one. Jesus, the Messiah of Israel, comes near the city of Jerusalem, and weeps over it.

The awful day it crucified our Saviour was approaching, and Jesus wept over the city.

Jesus cried for Jerusalem at least three times. Luke 13, tells us about a day when He wept over the city before arriving there.

“Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing. ³⁵ Look, your house is left to you desolate. I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.’”

Luke 19 also tells us about Jesus weeping over the city as He entered into it. He wept over it, saying:

“If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace—but now it is hidden from your eyes. The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side. They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of God’s coming to you.”

Jesus was weeping over the tragedy of a lost opportunity.

The Israelites that assembled in Jerusalem for the Passover missed the opportunity to be saved from both earthly and eternal destruction.

They were visited by their Saviour, but they did not know it. Instead of receiving Him, they killed Him.

He was weeping because He is not willing that any should perish. That's what the Scriptures clearly say. 1 Timothy 2:3-6 for example:

This is good, and pleases God our Saviour, who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.

For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all people. This has now been witnessed to at the proper time.

Jesus "would," but they "would not." The tragedy over which Jesus is weeping is the tragedy of lost opportunity.

The people of the holy city missed the opportunity to be saved because of foolish and wicked decisions they made! Their Saviour came to their city, but they would not have Him!

In our Gospel reading we hear Jesus say:

"Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing.

It's a beautiful image of the mothering nature of God. We often say God is Father, the best father we could possibly have, or even the father we may never have had.

But God is also mother. One who nurtures, protects, gathers us up and holds us safe.

The best mother we could ever have, or even the mother we may never have known.

But he speaks those words for you, as well as Jerusalem.

“Edward, Edward, often I have longed to gather you up, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing.

Lent is first and foremost about discovering we are loved. Its not about groveling and starving ourselves as an end in itself.

It is simply about naming and shaming those things that distract us from living in the love of God.

Jerusalem is a holy city, set aside as the foundation of our Christian story – the place where it all happened, where heaven meets earth.

And yet, this place can also be within you – a place where heaven meets earth.

Jesus longs to gather you up, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings.

Let it happen, let him do this for you.

Song: *Ten Measures of Beauty.*