

**In the Name of the Father and of the ☩ Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.**

**Grace and Peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ and may our Lord and Savior sanctify you in the truth, for His word is truth. Amen**

**Tenth Sunday after Trinity (2021)**

**Not Invented Here Syndrome**

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***“How can you say, ‘We are wise, and the law of the LORD is with us’? But behold, the lying pen of the scribes has made it into a lie . . . Were they ashamed when they committed abomination? No, they were not at all ashamed; they did not know how to blush. Therefore they shall fall among the fallen; when I punish them, they shall be overthrown, says the LORD.” (Jeremiah 8:8, 12, ESV)***

The history of the nation of Israel is fraught with disaster, discord, and denial of God. Although these people were chosen by God to be His people, they often turned their backs on Him, desiring the ways of men rather than the ways of God, they suffered from what is proverbially known as the *Not Invented Here Syndrome*. You know that propensity of the human creature to reject anything he did not think of himself. But does not God say to us through the writer of Proverbs, ***“Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding.” (Proverbs 3:5, ESV)*** Sure He does, and this is a reminder to us not to lean on our own understanding, but to lean solely on the Word of God to guide us in all that we do, especially all that we do in His Church.

Because of their propensity to lean on their own understanding, the Jewish nation, after the death of King Solomon, fell apart. Rent by dissension, it shattered into divided camps. Personal ambitions by some brought God’s nation to open rebellion against Him and against each other. This split the nation into two separate nations, Israel, and Judah, and permanently shattered what God had put together So decidedly was this split that the people God brought out of Egypt would never again be the united twelve tribes of Israel. As we know from reading the OT, the nation of Israel was eventually swallowed up by the Assyrians, never to be heard of again, and the nation of Judah, after vacillating between the worship of God and the worship of false gods, came crashing down as God had had enough and brought about their destruction at the hands of the Babylonians. All this because man could not leave God’s creation alone, they had to invent their own gods, to seek their own salvation, and they had to invent a religion that glorified man more than God.

Fast forward to the life of our Savior, Jesus Christ, and we see the remnant of Judah, that which God allowed to return from Babylon, a nation that is ruled by a king who had been appointed by those who now govern God’s people, the Romans. No longer can God’s people govern themselves. The Temple, which was rebuilt by those who returned from Babylon, has been relegated to the bin heap of history and now a new, more glorious Temple had been built. Although there is no command by God to build another Temple, Herod builds one anyway to glorify himself. It’s as if Herod said the first Temple was not his idea, so, let’s build another one, one that is bigger, better, and more glorious in every way.

For the pious Jew, this new Temple spoke of their faith, their zealously for God’s Law. It spoke of glory, not so much the glory of God, but the glory of God’s people. It shouted, “Look at we have done! Look at what we can do! There is nothing we can’t do in the name of the Lord.” It was reminiscent of the Tower of Babel. Oh, to be certain, for them it was a holy place. Was it not located in the center of God’s city, of Zion? Yes, it was. Were not offerings to God made in this

Temple? Yes, they were. Did not the people congregate in the Temple on the Sabbath? Yes, they did. The Temple was the people's place of worship, the place where they offered sacrifices for their sins, the place where men were to humble themselves before an Almighty God. But sadly, such men were few and far between. For most, their appearance in the Temple was obligatory, a sign of obedience. Their worship focused on their ability to keep the Law, it seldom focused on God's grace and mercy. The same God who relented of His anger and returned them from their exile in Babylon that they may rebuild His holy city, Jerusalem. The people had forgotten to whom they belonged. St. Paul sums it up nicely in his letter to the Romans, saying, ***"For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For, being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness."*** (Romans 10:2–3, ESV)

Because of their inward-looking worship, the people had forgotten what God had said to them through the prophet Hosea, ***"For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings."*** (Hosea 6:6, ESV) Jesus delivers this same message when He reveals that He, Himself is the Lord of the Sabbath, saying, ***"I tell you, something greater than the temple is here. And if you had known what this means, 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the guiltless. For the Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath."*** (Matthew 12:6–8, ESV) The Temple was not greater than the Son of God who came to seek and save the lost. Ah, but the Jews could not or would not recognize Him, their eyes were covered by a veil, the veil of self-worship as they went to Temple to honor their pious lives.

Although God had abandoned the Temple in the time of Ezekiel (Ezek. 10:18), He had not abandoned His people, those who continued to believe in the Messiah, the Savior whom God promised would come and undo the sin of Adam, freeing all men of their sin. In fact, some 500 years after the glory of God had gone out of the Temple, He returned as a babe when our Lord Jesus was dedicated on the fortieth day after His birth. Now, according to the Gospel Reading for today, Jesus returns to the holy city of Jerusalem, visiting the Temple for the last time.

As He draws near to the city, He begins to weep knowing how lost the inhabitants of Jerusalem are. Yes, they are Temple worshippers, but they know not true worship. Thus, Jesus says, ***"Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes . . . because you did not know the time of your visitation."*** (Luke 19:42–44, ESV) They know not the time of their visitation, they knew not of His incarnation. They knew not the peace which He brought from heaven into the world. They did not have the peace of Christ in their hearts. The peace that passes all understanding. The knowledge that God's promise given to Adam in the Garden of Eden is fulfilled in the flesh of His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ.

Continuing to weep over His people, our Lord prophesizes the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., saying, ***"For the days will come upon you, when your enemies will set up a barricade around you and surround you and hem you in on every side and tear you down to the ground, you and your children within you. And they will not leave one stone upon another in you."*** (Luke 19:43–44, ESV) All that you love, all that you worship, all that you take pride in, because you think you built it, will come crashing down and nothing will be left standing. The destruction will be far worse than when Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem in 586 BC. If only you had known, maybe you would have repented, but it was hidden from your eyes. Oh not the destruction, but My presence. Your eyes were open, but you could not see. You were blinded by your inward focus. You do not know, ***"the things that make for peace!"*** You do not know the Prince of Peace, the Son of God. The stones used to build the Temple you worship, they will be torn apart, not one shall stand upon another. But the true Temple, the Son of God, He will stand forever. But Him you do not see because your eyes are focused on what you built, not on the *new*

temple, the Son of God. He is *the stone that you rejected, the stone which caused you to stumble*. Jerusalem's lack of faith will lead to her destruction and those who survive, will be scattered to the four corners of the earth.

Our Lord Jesus first came to be among them as a babe, now He comes as a man, the Son of the Most High, to fulfill His Father's plan, to die on the Altar of the Cross for the sins of all men. But first, He must visit the Temple one last time.

On entering the city, our Lord goes straight to the Temple where He finds His Father's house has been turned into an outdoor bazaar. Finding commerce being conducted in His Father's house, Jesus says, ***"It is written, 'My house shall be a house of prayer,' but you have made it a den of robbers."*** (Luke 19:46, ESV) When worship in the house of God is focused on man and not on God, should we be surprised that man would turn worship into an image of himself. I think not.

For far too long we have had leaders, like those of Judah, who were not ***"ashamed when they committed abomination"*** (v. 12). Driven by a lust for religious entrepreneurship, they seek to glorify themselves, creating a world of their own making, which leads to the rejection of God and His Commandments, and especially His Sacraments.

Religious entrepreneurs say to themselves, those Commandments were, *Not Invented Here*. I can do better than Christ. I will become a god among my people as my programs will become the focus of their faith, their worship. No place is this more evident than man's rejection of God's Means of Grace, His Sacraments, Baptism, Holy Communion, and Absolution. In these Sacraments God has chosen to use earthly things combined with His Word as Means through which He comes to us, assuring us of His forgiving love. He does this in real time, through means that are visible, means that we can see, touch, and taste. Through these means God comes to us as He did to Moses on Mt. Sinai. In these blessed sacraments we receive the Son of God and the Holy Spirit for the forgiveness of our sins. Thus, His Means of Grace are holy things, but man would make them profane.

No, no, no, the religious entrepreneur says, this cannot be. Baptism is a symbol of my obedience to God's Law. Holy Communion, it is only symbolic or a metaphor. Jesus cannot be on earth and in heaven simultaneously. Absolution? Where does man think he gets the authority to forgive someone else's sin? These arguments remind us of the disciples who walked away from Jesus after He told them ***"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him."*** (John 6:53–56, ESV) Many who heard Him, said, ***"This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?"*** Then, St. John tells us, ***"After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him."*** (John 6:60, 66, ESV) So, too, today, many find these words of Jesus and St. Paul's regarding the sacraments to be nothing more than metaphor or allegory, and therefore, are not to be taken at face value. Which then, in their mind, justifies their efforts to invent something to replace the words of Jesus and St. Paul. These religious entrepreneurs are always looking for ways to satisfy their, *Not Invented Here Syndrome*.

Religious entrepreneurs have sought to turn God's people away from worship of the Triune God to the worship of self. In the name of *understanding* they have erected idols of men's *misunderstanding*, directing the people to give homage and praise to their works. But God reminds us not to lean on our own understanding, thinking, ***"We are wise, and the law of the LORD is with us? But behold, [let us realize that] the lying pen of the scribes has made it into a***

*lie.*” (v. 8) The lying voice of the religious entrepreneur veils God’s Word and replaces it with his own invention. Woe to them for this most grievous sin. Let us not forget, God punished the people of Judah for following false prophets, dare we think we will not receive the same fate if we chase after false prophets who lead us to believe in their inventions? I hope not. God warns us to turn back to Him the only true God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and worship Him only.

Fortunately, for us, God has not abandoned us. His visitation is made felt through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit who leads us to reject our arrogance, our *Not Invented Here Syndrome*, replacing it with that which leads us to heaven, faith in His beloved Son, Jesus Christ, who’s creative, soul-saving work we see in the Gospel Reading for today.

Coming to Jerusalem for the last time, Jesus cries for the chosen people of God. He cries because these were the recipients of the promises of God, His grace and mercy had been poured out upon them abundantly, yet they had turned their backs on Him rejecting His Son and His message and our Lord Jesus knew these people were going to have to face the wrath of God.

How significant is it that our God who knows all still asks, **“Why then has this people turned away in perpetual backsliding?”** (v. 5) Although He is disappointed by the actions of His people, God still cares. We can take great comfort in these words of Jeremiah because although God is disappointed in our sinfulness, our turning away from Him, despite all that we have done, God still says of us, these are **“My people.”**

Too often we forget this. Too often we forget we are His creation. We are the children of His covenant, and we have been redeemed by the gift of His Son’s sacrifice upon the Altar of the Cross. All our sin, all our rejection of Him, all our worship of false gods and unrighteous works are cleansed in the blood of His Son, Jesus. Therefore, there can be no doubt what our response should be, to repent, to give thanks to God for having *created* us, making us far better than our imaginations could ever make us, making us in His image, and remaking us in the image of His Son through His gift of faith.

Let us confess; “I a poor miserable sinner confess unto You all my sins and iniquities with which I have ever offended You.” Thus, pouring out our hearts in a sincere confession of our sins of arrogance and seeking God’s promised forgiveness for the sake of His Son, Jesus Christ. God then comes to us and forgives us as we hear our pastor say these blessed words, “In the stead and by the command of my Lord Jesus Christ, I forgive you all your sins.” In an earthly way, through an earthly creature, God speaks to us His Words of forgiveness and we rejoice knowing that Christ has secured our forgiveness by His Atoning Sacrifice on the Altar of the Cross.

Many live by the *Not Invented Here Syndrome* but thank God the grace and mercy of God is not invented here by men, for our forgiveness and eternal life in heaven would certainly be in doubt if it were. Therefore, let us rejoice that it is not our inventive spirit that saves, but the Spirit of God, whom He pours out upon us richly through His Son, Jesus Christ through His Word and Sacraments, let us rejoice that He alone enlightens us with His gifts, sanctifies and keeps us in the true faith, and let us rejoice in the truth we don’t have to reinvent the wheel, but simply rely on the One God has given us, His Son Jesus Christ. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

May the Peace of God which passeth all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.