

10th after Trinity 2017 - 8am PCh

*And when he was come near, he beheld the city and wept over it.  
(Luke 19:41)*

*May the words on my lips and the meditations of all our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord our Strength and our Redeemer.*

### **Introduction**

Our Gospel reading this morning is set, according to Luke's chronology, just after Jesus' **triumphal entry** into Jerusalem on a donkey, to the sound of cheering and the waving of palms.

On that day he was hailed as the **Messiah**, and no doubt carried the very earthly hopes of that city's people. But now he is **weeping** over the city and about to take action that will seal his fate, revealing him to be a very different **kind of messiah** than was expected.

Some of you may know the site of the Dominus Flevit church in Jerusalem with its beautiful window and panoramic view. From there the site of the former Temple is plainly visible, now marked out by the iconic golden Dome of the Rock. The Dominus Flevit church perched high above Jerusalem marks for ever that **place** and that **moment** when Jesus stood and **wept**.

What were those **tears about**, I wonder? And **what kind of messiah** would weep in such a way?

They may have been the tears of a **prophetic messiah** who could foresee the coming **destruction of the Temple**, which so shook the Jewish people. For them the temple stood as a mark of the covenant, the unshakeable promise of God to keep Israel safe. For them it was unthinkable that it should be *laid even with the ground, that not one stone should be left upon another*.

Or they may have been the tears of a prophetic messiah for whom the **signs of the times** were clear, who could see the way things were going for the city, that *the time of visitation*, that is of judgement was near. But for Jerusalem and its people this was *hidden from their eyes*; they were unable to see the signs of the times because of their estrangement from God. Cause for a prophet to weep indeed!

But those tears may also have been the tears of a **priestly messiah**, who knew that the religious authorities of the Temple had set their own interests and agendas before those of God.

This messiah did not only weep for Jerusalem, but descended the hill to the Temple to take action that he almost certainly knew would seal his fate, bringing him into open conflict with the religious authorities.

He goes into the Temple, angrily overriding the Temple priests and casting out those selling goods for sacrifice, saying *It is written, My house is a house of prayer: but you have made it a den of thieves*.

This may have been simple protest against rampant commercialisation of the Temple's life of ritual sacrifice at the expense of prayer. But I wonder if it was not more to do with what Luke describes as *a trench that the priestly authorities had cast about the Temple, which compassed it round* in **ritual** rather than **grace**, enclosing it in its own authoritarian views of salvation?

After his tears and his angry outburst Jesus teaches daily in the Temple. This speaks of urgency, and of a need to supersede the teaching that would normally have occurred there. His words would surely have been those of a prophetic and priestly messiah. But could they not also have been those of a **kingly messiah**?

Jesus must have begun to see that, at least *in this his day*, after such a controversial act in the Temple, the *writing was on the wall for him*, as for Belshazzar? He must have begun to realise that if the gospel of grace and the *things that belong to the peace* not just of Jerusalem but of the whole world, were going to triumph, they could only be won by the sacrifice of himself?

That would bring an urgency to the teaching of this priestly messiah, to make clear that his sacrificial offering was to be made for the whole world; not just for Jew, as the Temple authorities would have it, but for the Gentile too.

### **Conclusion**

So in these moments during which Jesus wept looking down on Jerusalem we have, I think, a rare glimpse of Jesus' own developing **consciousness** of being the **messiah**, and quite **what**

**that would entail**. I don't believe these were tears of self pity. But I do think they were the tears of a messiah who knew he was both **prophet and priest**, who was becoming certain that if the gospel of grace was to reach to the ends of the earth, encompassing both Jew and Gentile, then he would have to give his life.

And for that we and all the world should laud him not just as **priest and prophet**, but also as Christ the **King**.