

## **Homily For Tuesday of the 26th Week of Ordinary Time - Year 1**

### **St Peter's 8:30 AM Mass - September 28, 2021**

**Zechariah 8:20-23** "Ten from every nation will grasp a Jew's garment: We heard that God is with you."

**Psalms 87:1-7** "Glorious things are spoken of you, O city of God."

**Luke 9:51-56** "They entered a village of the Samaritans, but they did not receive him."

### **Cling To Jesus**

#### **Introduction**

We can always hold out hope that there will be, on some miraculous day, a lasting peace accord in the Middle East. In fact, it is very easy to wonder why this has not happened. Surely, people of good will can figure this thing out. However, even the slightest bit of research will strongly suggest that this is an extremely naive idea. I can say that I was that naive until visiting the Holy Land, as a pilgrim, a few years ago. What very quickly becomes apparent is that it is the height of arrogance to think that any meddling from western nations will 'solve the problem' as if we were fixing a glitch in a computer program. Although maybe that's a good analogy since many of those fixes seem to lead to more glitches.

#### **Zechariah**

It was also a complicated and hopeless time when Zechariah made a most remarkable prophecy. As the true prophets always do, he spoke the word of the Lord into a situation that seemed hopeless. This particular word came to a broken people: After the walls of Jerusalem had been broken down and the temple of God's presence destroyed; After a large portion of the people had been in exile in Babylon for decades; At a time when a disheartened few were left to a meagre and fragile existence.

But the word of the Lord came to Zechariah saying that, not only would the Jews return and be built up again, but the people would come from every nation to seek the Lord of hosts. In our own time Israel, and especially Jerusalem, has become a universal pilgrimage destination, a hub for the nations, to worship the

God of Israel. This happened after another unfathomable tribulation, the holocaust and the murder of millions of Jews before and during the second world war. The nation of Israel was re-established and now the nations stream there in great numbers. No one could have foreseen this except the prophets of God.

Zechariah says that ten people will want to attach themselves to every Jew. This kind of number is not a mathematical ratio. It means that multitudes will begin to know the Jews as the people of the covenant with the one true God. They will stream there just to walk in the footsteps of the people who gave birth to the long awaited Messiah. That Messiah, God's anointed one, became the fulfilment of the 3rd promise to Abraham. The first was a great nation. The second was a land. The third was that this nation would be a blessing to the entire world. Jesus IS the fulfilment of that promise.

One writer wrote: "How odd of God to choose the Jews." And Jews themselves, recognizing that they are God's chosen, have often said: I wish he had chosen someone else. But they were chosen to be the people of the covenant, the people of the promise, the elder brothers and sisters in the faith of all those who call themselves Christians.

## **Luke**

Like the Samaritans in today's Gospel passage, we Christians have often paid no attention to the heritage from which our Saviour comes. We have a terrible history of persecution and rejection. We lose sight of the absolute fact that God does not insert random events into history. What we call 'salvation history' is God's great plan from the beginning to bless us and to restore us to intimacy with him.

In this context, Jerusalem is dripping with theological meaning and purpose. It is the focus and direction for Jesus' whole earthly ministry. Jerusalem is the city of destiny for Jesus. Luke tells us that "when the days drew near for Jesus to be taken up, he set his face for Jerusalem." The Greek for being "taken up" means ascension, but it also means death. Jesus is on way to his death, but also his

ascension after the resurrection. That's the destiny towards which he sets his face.

Nothing will deter Jesus from his destiny. James and John don't get that yet as this event unfolds. They want to call down fire on a certain Samaritan town as if it was Sodom and Gomorrah all over again. They have a misplaced jealousy for Jesus. We just heard on Sunday in Mark's gospel that the disciples were jealous that someone not in their group was casting out demons in the name of Jesus. Our Lord told them it's ok. They are doing a good thing. In Luke, Jesus' reaction to their jealousy on his behalf is not only that it is misplaced but he rebukes them.

What is interesting about the Samaritans is that they are a symbol of the nations. When Assyria had conquered ten tribes of northern Israel, they dispersed them everywhere, mixing them with all the other nations that were part of their empire. Those Israelites entirely lost their Jewish identity because of this, but gained a new identity as a sign of the nations. The Good Samaritan is the image of God's mercy and care for the wounded. The Samaritan woman at the well is the image of sinners who return to God. We are that Samaritan woman. We are called to be that Good Samaritan.

### **Call to Action**

Here is the key point. Walking with Jesus, clinging to his robes, is our destiny also. There is no other way for us. It is the destiny of everyone who will cling to him, who will hold onto his robes. God's promises always come true, even those which seem the most outlandish. We can have confidence in God's word, who wants to make us saints. Whether it is ever possible to go to Jerusalem in our lifetimes, we can still make that spiritual pilgrimage in our hearts. Let us cling to his robes today.

Lord, all our hope is in you. Let us go up with you to Jerusalem, to the house of the Lord.

## **Key Scripture Passages**

**Entrance Antiphon:** *If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities, who could stand? But with you is found forgiveness.*

**Collect:** *May your grace, O Lord, make us determined to carry out good works.*

**Zechariah:** *Thus says the Lord of hosts: Many peoples and strong nations shall come to seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem, and to entreat the favour of the Lord. In those days ten men from nations of every language shall take hold of a Jew, grasping his garment and saying, "Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you."*

**Psalms:** *On the holy mount stands the city he founded. The Lord loves the gates of Zion. Glorious things are spoken of you, O city of God. Singers and dancers alike say, "All my springs are in you."*

**Luke:** *When the days drew near for Jesus to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem. They entered a village of the Samaritans to make ready for him. But they did not receive Jesus. When James and John saw it, they said, "Lord, do you want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them? But he turned and rebuked them."*