

## **KNOWING YOUR TIME OF DIVINE VISITATION**

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**Palm Sunday, March 24<sup>th</sup>, 2024 - 10 a.m.**

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**Luke 19:37-44 - "As he was drawing near—already on the way down the Mount of Olives— the whole multitude of his disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen, [38] saying, "Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!" [39] And some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, rebuke your disciples." [40] He answered, "I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out." [41] And when he drew near and saw the city, he wept over it, [42] saying, "Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. [43] 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 [44] and tear you down to the ground, you and your children within you. And they will not leave one stone upon another in you, because you did not know the time of your visitation."**

The crowd cheering for Jesus with outspread garments and waving palm branches is the ***very same crowd*** that will soon be shouting "***Crucify Him! Crucify Him!***" The very people ***worshipping*** Him will soon want to ***kill*** Him.

So the crowd cheers Him. And all the while Jesus knows they will soon reject Him and crucify Him. And what breaks Jesus' heart is all bound up in His emotion packed words in **verses 42-44 - "Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. [43] 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 [44] and tear you down to the ground, you and your children within you. And they will not leave one stone upon another in you, because you did not know the time of your visitation." - IPAD**

There are *three very important thoughts* bubbling up out of Jesus' heart in these words: ***First, there is the people's ignorance of both their time of divine 'visitation' (44), and the 'things that make for peace' (42). Second, because of their ignorance, they will experience dreadful judgement (43-44).*** The city and its people will be dashed to the ground. ***And third, we see Jesus' response to all of this (42).*** He ***weeps*** while the people ***cheer***. His heart is broken by what He sees in the future for those in the palm waving crowd. And He weeps because they refused His rule, His mercy, and His peace.

And the Holy Spirit records these words and emotions of Jesus so we will never doubt His love and mercy. We are meant to see His desire for our reception of His grace and love - His ***visitation*** in our lives.

1) THE PEOPLE WERE IGNORANT OF THEIR MOMENT OF DIVINE OPPORTUNITY AND VISITATION

**IPAD - Luke 19:42, 44 - "Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes....[44]....(speaking of the coming judgment) and tear you down to the ground, you and your children within you. And they will not leave one stone upon another in you, because you did not know the time of your visitation."**

**Verse 44** says judgement was coming upon Jerusalem because she didn't recognize her "***time of visitation.***" And in **verse 42** judgement was coming because she didn't recognize the "***things that make for peace.***"

Whenever that term "***visitation***" is used in reference to God in the Scriptures it always refers to one of two options. The Bible talks about God visiting His people with ***judgement***, and it talks about God visiting His people with ***peace and mercy***. Let me quickly give you some examples:

First, with *judgement* - **Isaiah 29:5-6** - “**But the multitude of your foreign foes shall be like small dust, and the multitude of the ruthless like passing chaff. And in an instant, suddenly, [6] you will be visited by the Lord of hosts with thunder and with earthquake and great noise, with whirlwind and tempest, and the flame of a devouring fire.**”- IPAD

Second, the Bible also talks about God visiting people with His *goodness and delivering mercy* - **Genesis 50:24** - “**And Joseph said to his brothers, "I am about to die, but God will visit you and bring you up out of this land to the land that he swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob."** - IPAD

So, we see in the Bible there are visitations from the Lord to His people, and these visitations take the form of either *judgement* or *mercy*. The important thing, from *our human* standpoint, is to *know* about these times of visitation from the LORD, *recognize* what is happening, and know how to make the appropriate *response*.

The important question is *what kind of divine visitation was Jesus referring to in His impassioned words as He wept over Jerusalem?* Was the visitation the people had missed a visitation of *judgement* or *mercy*? Actually, our text gives us the clear answer to that question:

**IPAD - Luke 19:41-42 - “And when he drew near and saw the city, he wept over it, [42] saying, “Would that you, even you, had known on this day *the things that make for peace!* But now they are hidden from your eyes.”**

So, when Jesus weeps over Jerusalem - when He says, “***You didn’t know the time of your visitation - your time for making peace***” - He means, “You didn’t take the opportunity to receive God’s forgiveness and grace” This was a ***merciful, peace-giving visitation*** from God. Jesus was saying, “You didn’t grasp God’s redemption when it was staring you in the face. You ignored the most tremendous chance for salvation you would ever have.”

***Never before had Jesus come to this world like this.*** This was ***Almighty God, incarnate!*** Never before had God’s forgiving arms been so clearly revealed. Never before had His kingdom been offered with such power and simplicity. ***The time was unique!*** And the people were blindly numb to their greatest chance.

And this wasn't the first time Jesus had pressed this issue with the crowds - **Luke 12:54-56 - "He also said to the crowds, "When you see a cloud rising in the west, you say at once, 'A shower is coming.' And so it happens. [55] And when you see the south wind blowing, you say, 'There will be scorching heat,' and it happens. [56] You hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of earth and sky, *but why do you not know how to interpret the present time?*" - IPAD**

Look at that last question very carefully - ***"Why do you not know how to interpret this present time?"*** That's a very important question to be able to answer. It's important to think it through because there might be people here today who are wondering, ***"How can Jesus blame people for not knowing something? How can God judge them - judge them so severely - for what they didn't know? How fair is that?"***

But ***why*** doesn't Jerusalem know her moment of visitation? ***Why*** doesn't she know the things that would make for peace? Is it because she ***was never told*** about her time of visitation? Was she ignorant of her time of visitation because she ***never had a chance*** to know about it? Was she ignorant of her divine visitation like I'm ignorant about the dark side of the moon?

No. When Jesus says Jerusalem didn't know her time of visitation He **doesn't** mean she was unaware of the **facts**. Jesus makes this point very clearly in another moving passage where he weeps over Jerusalem's stubborn ignorance:

**IPAD - Luke 13:34-35 - "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, *the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it!* How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not! [35] Behold, your house is forsaken. And I tell you, you will not see me until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!' "**

The time of visitation had been announced for centuries. The terms for peace had been offered freely and repeatedly rejected. The people didn't **make time** - they didn't **embrace** the announcement of God's saving visitation in Jesus. They didn't like the idea of **humbly repenting** in order to receive the terms of the peace God offered to guilty sinners.

These people had been told repeatedly the King of kings was now in their midst. They had been clearly **told** (and **shown**) that the kingdom of God was right there in Jesus Christ. Immediately after the healing of the lepers Jesus spoke to the crowd: **“Being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, he answered them, “The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed, [21] nor will they say, ‘Look, here it is!’ or ‘There!’ for behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you” (Luke 17:20-21). - IPAD**

This is Jesus’ way of saying, ***“You people are making excuses. You’re trying to push off into the future a kingdom that is being offered to you right now!”***

On another occasion Jesus cast out a demon while the people watched. Then, immediately after that demonstration of His divine power, He said this: **“But if it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.” (Luke 11:20).**

So these people had scores of years of **revelation from the prophets**. Jesus said they killed the prophets. They had the ministry and testimony of **John the Baptist**. John was beheaded. They had the words and actions of **Jesus Christ**. And when Jesus came unto his own, they wouldn’t receive Him or His words.



That's why, when Jesus says they didn't **know** their time of visitation, He doesn't mean they didn't have the **information**. He means they didn't **receive** the news. They didn't **humble themselves**. They didn't **embrace** their opportunity. In the words of the Apostle Paul, they "**suppressed the truth in unrighteousness.**"

Then Jesus, with tears of compassion in His eyes, describes the **consequences** of their rejection of God's moment of gracious visitation:

2) **BECAUSE THEY DIDN'T KNOW THEIR TIME OF VISITATION, JUDGEMENT WAS COMING UPON JERUSALEM**

**IPAD - Luke 19:42-44 - "Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. [43] 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 [44] and tear you down to the ground, you and your children within you. And they will not leave one stone upon another in you, because you did not know the time of your visitation."**

So we see there are ***two phases of judgement*** identified in this passage. The first is ***immediate***. The second is coming in the ***future***: The ***first*** pronouncement is in **verse 42** - **“Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes.”**

The ***second*** pronouncement is in verses **43 and 44**. Speaking of the coming Roman invasion, Jesus says they will **“set up a barricade around you and surround you and hem you in on every side [44] and tear you down to the ground, you and your children within you. And they will not leave one stone upon another in you, because you did not know the time of your visitation.” - IPAD**

So the first phase is ***darkened understanding***. And the ***second*** phase is ***collapse of circumstances***. The first occurs ***immediately***. The second, ***much later on*** (the Romans destroyed Jerusalem ***forty years*** later after Jesus spoke these words).

I want to take **two teaching times this Palm Sunday** (a.m and p.m.) to take this text and apply it to you and me. I want to talk about those times God comes to us and works on our hearts in a special way. I want to talk about the times God makes **special appeals** to our minds and our hearts - times when He takes the time to plead - to warn - to entreat our wills. And, just as importantly, I want to talk about the cost of **not knowing**, or, perhaps more accurately, **not responding** to these times of visitation.

Every **opportunity** brings added **responsibility**. We experience more opportunities to grow in grace in a month than most people in the rest of the world experience in five years. Truly, we are a **blessed** and **visited** people when it comes to the message of the gospel and the means of grace to grow and flourish spiritually.

But all of this also increases our obligation. Nothing is of greater cost than **missed opportunity**. We all like to think we can set our own agenda for responding to God. But that simply isn't the case at all. We simply **must** know when we have a special chance, a golden moment, a privilege too precious to waste. This is especially true when the opportunity - the **visitation** - has **eternal consequences**.

God has visited us in Jesus Christ, God the Son, the Second Person of the Trinity. God has come in Jesus Christ, full of **grace and mercy and truth**. He has come to **save sinners**. Because we are **all** sinners, and because God has made only **one** saving offer for mankind, how we **respond** to Him is absolutely crucial. In fact, **not** missing our moment of visitation is the **critical factor** of our lives.

So on this Palm Sunday, God, through the Holy Spirit, brings the truth of Jesus Christ to enlighten your mind. You and I are sinners. We simply cannot save ourselves. And, because we are mortal, we don't have forever to seize our chance for God's grace and forgiveness.

Or, perhaps you **are already a believer in Jesus**. You have responded to Jesus Christ by making Him your Lord and Savior. But your heart has grown cold and distant. The things of the Spirit don't reach you - don't excite anything in your soul. You just haven't been diligent about **abiding** in Jesus. There is nothing immediate and living and life-changing in your relationship with Him.

Perhaps you've allowed yourself to think that because you listened to the Spirit of God **once** in coming for forgiveness and salvation, you have been somehow released from the need to **devote instant submission whenever He speaks to your heart about purity and honesty and worldliness and pride and materialism.**

So Jesus comes, by His Spirit, and speaks. He **visits** or, perhaps, **re-visits** your mind. You are almost surprised that He has allowed you to hear His voice once again. Perhaps you had almost forgotten all about Him. But He comes once again. He speaks through His Word or through a church service or through your conscience. How important is it that you **know your time of visitation?**

In His parable about the soils and how people receive the Word, Jesus said, "**He who has ears, let him hear!**" There is a **kind** of hearing that just having ears doesn't guarantee. Many people don't **hear with seriousness** when God speaks.

What if they **don't** hear seriously? What happens then? Jesus says if they don't hear, they will be visited **again**. All opportunities come to an end somewhere, sometime. God will eventually visit in **judgment**.

This is so important to remember. We only control **our** side of the agenda. When we stubbornly **refuse** to recognize God's visitation in grace to our hearts the ball is taken out of our court. Jesus said, regarding Jerusalem, that, because she had **again** refused God's merciful visitation, **two things** were now about to happen. Here are the two things Jesus predicted as He wept over Jerusalem:

- a) **FIRST, the understanding becomes darkened - Luke 19:42 - "Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes." - IPAD**

"**Now** they are **hidden** from your eyes." What frightening **timing** words. We only control certain parts of the process of the entrance of truth into our minds and hearts. We get the **initial** chance - perhaps **several** - or **many** chances. But eventually, after that, it's taken out of our hands. **Jesus said so.**

And He said it more than once. Most of us know these familiar words from His lips - **Matthew 13:12-13** - **“For to the one who has, more will be given, and he will have an abundance, but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. [13] This is why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.” - IPAD**

Just recently I came across these words, penned around 1935 by **A. W. Tozer**. No one says this anymore, but we ignore this message to our peril:

***“Every ransomed person owes his salvation to the fact that during the days of his sinning God kept the door of mercy open by refusing to accept any of his evil acts as final. The prodigal son is an illustration of this. The enormity of the boy’s sin was admitted by the father when he said plainly, ‘This my son was dead, and is alive again’ (Luke 15:24). The good man had staggered under as cruel an attack upon paternal love as had ever been recorded, but he never closed his son’s account. He never accepted his son’s act as conclusive, so he kept his heart and his door open.”***

***“The lone hope for a sinning person is that for a while God will not accept his sinful conduct as decisive. He will hold judgment in suspension, giving the sinner opportunity either to reverse himself by repentance or to commit the final act that will close the books against him forever.”***

***“God being who He is, the slightest act of wrongdoing must bring upon the sinner instant retribution were it not that, owing to the work of Christ in atonement, God is able justly to suspend justice. The cross does not destroy the deadly force of sins committed. Unless they are removed by divine forgiveness they will return upon the perpetrator without mercy when the final act of evil springs the trap on him at last.”***

***“There comes a final act. This may not be the last act of the sinner’s life, but rather the last one God will hold to be indecisive. It was so with King Saul. The Lord stopped all intercession for him, wrote him off as irreclaimable and closed the book. His doom was fixed the day God accepted his disobedience as the true index of his total character.”***



***“God gives us all the benefit of a long doubt; how long is His secret. It is a solemn thought that no one knows when he has crossed the line. On every city street and in quiet country lanes there are dead men walking whose fate has been settled long ago, but who, in their bold self-confidence, are callously unaware of it. The Judge has taken some last act of reckless sin as proof of what He may expect from them for the future. There remains for them only a certain fearful looking for judgment.”***

This is profound, well stated, and deeply disturbing theology. This is why, every time these words are spoken in the Scriptures, they come from the lips of our Lord Jesus: ***“He who has ears, let him hear!” Cherish*** the visitation of gracious, loving, sometimes confronting and discomfoting truth!

***Nourish*** the reception of Jesus and His reign and rule. Know what’s at stake every time He speaks through conscience. Throw out everything else in order to ***embrace*** the visitation of the Lord whenever His Word comes to your mind. Never ignore it. Never take it lightly. Never delay your repentant, humble response when God visits your life. ***Fight the enemy for the possession of your mind!***

Nothing will destroy your soul faster than the **casual treatment of a time of divine visitation**. You simply can't **wait for a better moment** to respond to God's visitation. That is simply **not** an option. A **better** moment will never come. You may have wasted much time already. You can do nothing about that now. The **best** time to passionately follow the Lord Jesus is ten years ago. The **second best** time is right now.

Then, Jesus said there was a second judgement for not knowing the time of His visitation:

- b) **SECOND, after a darkened understanding, there would come a collapse of circumstances - Luke 19:43-44 - "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 [44] and tear you down to the ground, you and your children within you. And they will not leave one stone upon another in you, because you did not know the time of your visitation." - IPAD**

This is quite striking. Jesus **pronounced** this judgement as He wept over Jerusalem. Nothing happened for **forty years**. I'm sure many of the people never even **remembered** Jesus had pronounced the event by the time it actually took place.

Here's what I'm getting at. I'm sure, forty years later, when the walls of Jerusalem began to tumble down - when the people - the children - found their lives dashed against the stones - I'm sure people wondered ***why all of this was happening to them!*** Where was God in this national disaster? Why wasn't He helping them? Being raised praying Jews, I'm sure many called upon Jehovah God to come to their aid. Why didn't He answer their prayer? Nobody remembered what Jesus said ***forty years ago***. They missed their day of visitation. Jesus said so.

I'm not preaching this to frighten or threaten anyone, anymore than Jesus said these same things to frighten those people long ago. The point is ***God's Word never returns void***. But that doesn't mean it always returns ***blessing***. Sometimes it returns in ***judgment***. But we must never forget, something happens whenever God visits and whenever God speaks. Our response to God for ***better*** or for ***worse***, always ***matters***. It always makes a difference. You are changed, little by little, for better or for worse, at the conclusion of every church service.

The cost of missing your day of divine visitation doesn't show up right away - not the **full** cost. Sure, the mind gradually closes to divine light. Sure, the senses and affections gradually turn from spiritual things to the passing interests and fads of the world around us. But the **collapse** - the **crumbling of lives, and homes, and marriages, and eventually, when Jesus the King comes back to judge and rule the world, the eternal loss of the soul** - that doesn't happen overnight.

But that time will come for everyone. Jesus said those who didn't put His words into action in their lives would be like a house that looked good for a while, but **collapsed** when the final storm of His judgement came.

Do you know your time of visitation? Do you have a sense of the times? Is Jesus knocking at the door of your heart right now in some way? Please remember how **urgent** it is to seize every opportunity to turn to Jesus Christ.

Finally, there's a **third thought** in these words of Jesus:

- 3) **THESE WORDS OF JUDGEMENT FROM JESUS ARE RECORDED TO EXTEND HIS HEART OF GRACE FOR THOSE WHO WILL HEAR THEM TODAY**

Ask yourself this question: ***Why did the Holy Spirit preserve these words of judgement? What makes them relevant for me?*** The answer, of course, lies in Father God's desire that we not make the same mistake these people made. The ***warning*** of judgement is recorded as an expression of ***divine grace*** and ***mercy***.

Jesus would say to people listening to this teaching today, ***"Don't let this happen to you!"*** The motive for this teaching is nothing but divine mercy. This is the message any church worth its salt must proclaim. This is why the apostles called the Scriptures the ***Word of His grace***. Any life can be salvaged, no matter how black or bleak. There is hope for any who seize their moment of Divine visitation.

This Palm Sunday season focuses uniquely on Jesus Christ, the Redeemer King, who came and died for our sins. This day celebrates the most loving ***visitation*** any of us has ever had from God Almighty. Look to Jesus. He's the One who would speak to each person here today and say, "Whatever else you do or do not get done in this life, whatever else you have time for or don't, whatever else you excel in or not, ***know your time of visitation - know your day of opportunity - if you have ears, make sure you listen and hear!***"

And ***respond*** while you have such a gracious opportunity.  
Never miss one chance to say “yes” to Jesus Christ. Those are  
the most gracious and loving words any person can ever hear.