

Psalm 122
Wednesday, Week of Pentecost 16A

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Mundelein Seminary

122 *Lætatus sum*

1 I was glad when they said to me, *
"Let us go to the house of the LORD."

2 Now our feet are standing *
within your gates, O Jerusalem

3 Jerusalem is built as a city *
that is at unity with itself.

4 To which the tribes go up,
the tribes of the LORD, *
the assembly of Israel,
to praise the Name of the LORD.

5 For there are the thrones of judgment, *
the thrones of the house of David.

6 Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: *
"May they prosper who love you.

7 Peace be within your walls *
and quietness within your towers.

8 For my brethren and companions' sake, *
I pray for your prosperity.

9 Because of the house of the LORD our God, *
I will seek to do you good."

Jerusalem is built as a city that is at unity with itself.

Brothers and Sisters, grace to you and peace from God our Father and the LORD Jesus Christ. Amen

The tribes went up to praise the LORD, pilgrims to see the thrones of judgment. It was a holy obligation, an expression of life in covenant with the One who alone was holy. God knew what they would need for unity, a common direction, a putting of one foot in front of the other, a singular purpose, a breath of thanksgiving, a song of praise.

God knew what they would need because there never has been a tribe that's gotten along very well. People say and do things to their relatives that would make even a dog blush.

People say and do things to their neighbors, the ones with whom they share a common culture and religious expression that would make a brood of vipers look like well-heeled choirboys. People say and do things to people in other tribes that defile, destroy, and desecrate to such a degree that they no longer recognize that this one belongs to me and I belong to her because we all belong to One God who has made us all, the One who is the only author and giver of life, and who is at unity with himself.

As long as the tribes have been counting time (5778 years for some of us this year), as long as the tribes of this earth have been counting time, and maybe even longer they've needed a place to seek such unity, a place to experience peace, a place where they could close their eyes without fear. *I lie down to sleep. At once I fall asleep.* A place where fist, stick, knife or gun could be laid down, and hands set free to hold, to caress, to welcome. If you'd spent the last year on a desert battlefield, you, too, would be glad if someone said to you, "Let us go to the house of the LORD." Gladness, indeed, although it may be tentative at first, but as you start to move in that new direction, as your feet are walking in the way of peace, it would start to flow through your body, a surging like a high mountain stream cascading over the rocks and shimmering in the mid-day sun.

Those who had gone before you on this journey had left you this song to sing, so that wherever you started from, your destination would be the same, Jerusalem, the city that is at unity with itself. *Yerushalyim*, Vision of Peace, City of Peace. *Peace be within your walls, and quietness within your towers.* But to reach that peace there are thrones of judgment, thrones of the house of David. You cannot walk into God's peace without God's judgment, God's *mishpat*, and as every pilgrim learns somewhere along the way, there is no hiding from God's *mishpat*, because everything you've done is already known.

In truth, those who had gone before you on this journey, have left the whole world this song to sing, so that every city would be Jerusalem, and Jerusalem would be every city, City of Shalom, City of *mishpat*. Would that all the tribes of this world be gathered into God's peace. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often has God desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings. Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Joseph, Benjamin. As long as the tribes have been counting time, they have been in need of peace. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how is it that most days you are still the city who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it. O Jerusalem, O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, vision of peace, where is your peace?

The pilgrims on the way were instructed to pray for the peace of Jerusalem, for it is central to praising the LORD. This is the house where he lives, the place where his glory dwells. They came because even if they were to hear judgment on their faithlessness, a death sentence on their rebellion, they trusted in the One who held in his love the promised peace. They came to Jerusalem, drawn to the One who is the center of life, for at the heart of such judgment, such *mishpat*, such Divine justice, they believed that God would set things aright. Through the thrones of judgment, God's justice would be spoken into the lives of the community. At the thrones of judgment, voices would be raised to seek the peace that could only come when relationships were made whole, when wrongdoings were confessed, when trust in God was greater than trust in oneself. For in this place you were bound to meet

someone you had treated as an enemy but whose bond with you was being revealed as they, too, listened for a word of the LORD. Would that all the world enter into a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, every city a Jerusalem, Jerusalem, every city.

This world cries out in torment, its hungry children blown apart by IEDs, its beautiful women raped, its tired men, headless corpses rotting in the mud. Over 19 million refugees roam this earth looking for Jerusalem, pilgrims every one of them. And Jerusalem, the city that is at unity with itself, is looking for them. For just as the mapmakers of old knew, *orbis terrarum*, it is the center of the universe, because here God speaks his Word and in his embrace we come to know all that he will do to bring peace.

The church, is born here, water and blood flowing down to the earth, The church sings this sings this same prayer for the peace of Jerusalem, for the peace of the world. *For the peace from above and for our salvation let us pray to the LORD... For the peace of the whole world for the well being of the church of God and for the unity of all let us pray to the LORD...* Our prayers are joined to the prayers of every pilgrim who has sought peace, of every prayer that has been voiced in hope.

We are born here, every last one of us. Baptized into the death that happened just outside the city gates. Baptized into the One who is the living Jerusalem, who is the bearer of divine peace, and from whom this universe comes forth. Baptized into the One whose peace passes all understanding. We are born here, in the seat of mercy from where God's judgment and thus, God's eternal peace flows. Jerusalem, the Holy City, the place where God's glory dwell, breathes a unity like the center of a swirling vortex where everything that exists is held in place, and without which all matter would fragment into nothingness. Every time we raise a voice in anger, every time we deny God's desire to gather us in, every time we seek to hurt or to destroy, every time we seek to be our own Jerusalem, a place of judgment without mercy, he who has opened his arms wide, stretches even further.

We pray for the peace of Jerusalem so that all the world, the children of every city, of every time, will be drawn to him who is the center. We long to hear their voices sing, *I was glad when they said to me, let us go to the house of the LORD*. All of us together, to receive his holy peace, to taste his blessed mercy, to travel on pilgrimage with brothers and sisters of every tribe and nation who are his gift, for by loving those whom he puts in front of us we will meet him on our way to this Jerusalem and the next. Amen