

## "Will This Be Our Grandchildren's Church?"

*'Thus says the LORD: "If you will not listen to Me, to walk in My Law which I have set before you, and to heed the words of My servants the prophets whom I send to you urgently, though you have not heeded, then I will make this House like Shiloh, and I will make this city a curse for all the nations of the earth."*

The saying goes that those who ignore history are doomed to repeat it. This certainly is the lesson that the story of Shiloh teaches concerning all God's people. The story of Shiloh starts out very promising. Following the Exodus with Moses, Joshua led the people. *"The whole congregation of the people of Israel assembled at Shiloh, and set up the Tent of Meeting there; the land lay subdued before them"* (Joshua 18:1). Here was a place where the LORD would be graciously present with His people wherein He gave the faithful His good gifts of forgiveness, eternal life, salvation, peace and hope. The House of God was at Shiloh. Not long afterwards the corruption of the church officials and the priests took place and we are informed that they set up a graven image *"until the day of the captivity of the land"* and *"as long as the house of God was at Shiloh"* (**Judges** 18:30-31).

Finally, the Holy Spirit informs us, through the psalmist, that God *"forsook his Dwelling at Shiloh, the Tent where He dwelt among men, and delivered his power to captivity, his glory to the hand of the foe. He gave His people over to the sword, and vented His wrath on His heritage"* (Psalm 78:60-62).

In the beginning of its history the LORD was graciously present with the congregation at Shiloh, but through neglect of God's Word and the corruption of its people, The LORD departed from Shiloh and His Church was no longer there and its day of gracious visitation had ended. Even though they may have continued to assemble until the day of their destruction, they did so apart from the Presence of the LORD. Gone is gone and Shiloh, as it once was, is no more.

See also Jerusalem: The Shekinah (glory of the Lord) departed. **Jer.** 7:12-14, **Matt** 23:37-38. Ephesus: **Revelation** 2:2-5 It's Lampstand was removed and Ephesus is now Islam. The lampstand came to Rome, and Rome now has the Pope. Germany and Sweden had it, but now it has been removed and they now have empty state churches. England had it, but gone is gone and England now acknowledges many god's.

The Word of the LORD came to the United States of America. What better place, with the liberties upon which this nation is founded for the freedom of the Church to flourish? Our Lutheran forefathers, men, women and youth made excellent use of this liberty to begin congregations wherein the Word of God was taught and preached in its truth and purity, and the Sacraments administered properly. Thousands of Lutheran congregations were founded and the LORD was graciously with His people.

But alas, We find that today the desires of the people supplanting the gifts of God's grace; namely, the forgiveness of sins, eternal life and salvation. That same light is now

shining more often in Sudan and Kenya. Gone is gone when the Word of God, which is the basis for true personal repentance and congregation repentance, is ignored, despised and denied. *"If you will not listen to Me, to walk in My Torah which I have set before you, and to heed the words of My servants the prophets whom I send to you urgently, though you have not heeded, then I will make this House like Shiloh."*

Dear Christians of Our Savior Lutheran Church, the LORD God does not force you to receive His gifts of forgiveness, and eternal life through faith in Jesus. The One True God does not impose His means of grace on anyone, for that would not be grace. He does not throttle a non-Christian to have faith in Him and He does not forcefully bind you to Him. Should you reject the Lord and His Gospel The Holy Spirit will depart from you. If this happens then Christ will no longer be graciously present with you, and if you or I, through our own fault and neglect, gradually slide into such a fallen condition, God's departure may not even be noticed. That's a scary thought and one that ought to cause sober pondering and continued repentance.

The Lord does not impose and force upon a congregation the believing, teaching and confessing of the Gospel – that the sinner is justified by the grace of God through faith in Christ's Person and Work. If a congregation abandons this Good News and sets aside the Lord's means of grace and ministry of the Word, there will, according to that same Word of God, come a time when the LORD, Who is present everywhere, is no longer graciously present with those people.

We pray and we work that this would not be so today or tomorrow, for gone is gone. Will the generations yet unborn be able to hear the Good News of Jesus Christ, crucified and risen? Will our children's infants be able to be baptized in the Church? Will the congregation be able to make the confession of sins and hear, as you have heard every week, that you are forgiven of all your sins in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit? Will the Body and the Blood of Jesus, that was given and shed for you for the remission of all your sins, be administered here. In short,

"Will This Be Our Grandchildren's Church?" May God, in His mercy, grant it for Our Savior Jesus' sake.

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