

Scripture Reading: Genesis 19

“15 When the morning dawned, the angels urged Lot to hurry, saying, 'Arise, take your wife and your two daughters who are here, lest you be consumed in the punishment of the city.' 16 And while he lingered, the men took hold of his hand, his wife's hand, and the hands of his two daughters, the Lord being merciful to him, and they brought him out and set him outside the city. 17 So it came to pass, when they had brought them outside, that he said, 'Escape for your life! Do not look behind you nor stay anywhere in the plain. Escape to the mountains, lest you be destroyed.' 18 Then Lot said to them, 'Please, no, my lords! 19 Indeed now, your servant has found favor in your sight, and you have increased your mercy which you have shown me by saving my life; but I cannot escape to the mountains, lest some evil overtake me and I die. 20 See now, this city is near enough to flee to, and it is a little one; please let me escape there (is it not a little one?) and my soul shall live.' 21 And he said to him, 'See, I have favored you concerning this thing also, in that I will not overthrow this city for which you have spoken. 22 Hurry, escape there. For I cannot do anything until you arrive there.' Therefore the name of the city was called Zoar. 23 The sun had risen upon the earth when Lot entered Zoar. 24 Then Jehovah rained brimstone and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah, from Jehovah out of the heavens. 25 So He overthrew those cities, all the plain, all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground. 26 But his wife looked back behind him, and she became a pillar of salt. 27 And Abraham went early in the morning to the place where he had stood before Jehovah. 28 Then he looked toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the plain; and he saw, and behold, the smoke of the land which went up like the smoke of a furnace. 29 And it came to pass, when God destroyed the cities of the plain, that God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when He overthrew the cities in which Lot had dwelt.”

"God Destroys Sodom & Gomorrah"

It is not often that you will hear what is commonly referred to as a 'fire & brimstone' sermon here at Church of the King!

- **However, we do focus on expositional preaching and thus we must deal with what we come to in the text...**
- **And this morning we come to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah with fire and brimstone from heaven!**
- **Lord willing, we will learn the lessons God has for us regarding His justice and His judgments!**

There are many in the modern church who think it best to focus on the love and grace of God rather than His justice and judgment... But I trust we will see today that you really cannot have one without the other and that you cannot understand one without understanding the other.

Our text is very brief and to the point: Lot has entered the little city, Zoar and then we read:

“24 Then Jehovah rained brimstone and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah, from Jehovah out of the heavens. 25 So He overthrew those cities, all the plain, all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground.”

- **The Angels had visited Sodom and determined that their iniquity was full and it was time for them to be judged.**
- **Their judgment gives us a picture of the severity and means of the eternal judgment that God has determined for the wicked.**

Lest anyone think this is just Old Testament stuff that can be left behind we should remember that it was Jesus Himself who spoke most about the eternal fires of judgment where the worm does not die.

We must also see that the severity of God's judgment reminds of us the great love that He has for His people. As the Apostle Paul reminds us in that glorious third chapter of Romans; it was Jesus Himself who bore the just judgment that was due all of us! *[Remind children about propitiation]*

Romans 3: “19 Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. 20 Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin. 21 But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, 22 even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

[in other words, we all deserve the fire & brimstone rained down on these cities!]

24 being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, 25 whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, 26 to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.”

- The great truth that we see there is that God is able to extend His great love to His people...
- Declaring them just or righteous without violating His own justice because the judge judgment of our sins was taken by Jesus on the cross!

So as difficult as it may be to consider just what happened there that morning to the cities on the plain, it will give us a greater understanding of the work of Jesus and Lord willing a greater burden for the lost!

The destruction of these wicked cities was swift and complete and we know from Deuteronomy that it included others like Admah, and Zeboim. Some commentators look for a natural way to explain what happened there, when the text itself could not have been more clear. With obvious Trinitarian implications verse 24 simply reads “Then Jehovah rained brimstone and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah, from Jehovah out of the heavens.”

- This judgment was from the Lord and it came from the heavens...

And this judgment was total:

25 “So He overthrew those cities, all the plain, all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground.”

- At least four cities were destroyed and destroyed completely.

Now the hard part is to actually think through what this means... Sure, we know there were some very wicked men in that city as we have seen over the past couple of weeks:

- No judgment was too tough for them, most would think!
- But fire & brimstone was rained down on every man woman and child in these cities!

Dr. Luke recorded for us how the Lord Jesus revealed the type of life going on day by day in these very cities ...

Luke 17:26 “And as it was in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man: 27 They ate, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. 28 Likewise as it was also in the days of Lot: They ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built; 29 but on the day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all.”

This judgment of Sodom will be used as the example of judgments for Edom, for Babylon, for Israel and the cities in which Jesus preached so it is important for us to consider just what it means.

- **Were each and every one of the people there equally wicked?**
- **Were there none that even approached something like a normal life?**
- **Surely some of the children could not be held responsible for the sins of their parents!**

These are tough question to ask, but important questions to ask, and to ponder. If we are faithful to the Great Commission and share the Good News that Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life that people need and that to reject Him means eternal damnation in the Lake of Fire we will certainly confront such questions in our time as well.

- **What about those who have never heard of Jesus?**
- **What about someone who tried to life a moral life?**
- **What about the children?**

Surely God is not going to judge most of the cities we would know today as He did the wicked cities on that plain! What we see Jesus teaching in the sixth chapter of Mark's Gospel account should perhaps give us great pause...

Mark 6: "10 [Jesus] said to [His disciples as He sent them out], "In whatever place you enter a house, stay there till you depart from that place. 11 And whoever will not receive you nor hear you, when you depart from there, shake off the dust under your feet as a testimony against them. Assuredly, I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city!" 12 So they went out and preached that people should repent."

And such warnings are not only for those cities before the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus, but carry on to the Saints in the Churches...

Jude "4 For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness & deny the only Lord God & our Lord Jesus Christ. 5 But I want to remind you, though you once knew this, that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe. 6 And the angels who did not keep their proper domain, but left their own abode, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day; 7 as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities around them in a similar manner to these, having given themselves over to sexual immorality and gone after strange flesh, are set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire. 8 Likewise also these dreamers defile the flesh, reject authority, and speak evil of dignitaries."

We see the same type of warning in II Peter 2, with the reference to righteous Lot that we have studied in weeks past. And we also have the warning of Jesus in Matthew 11 that we considered last week: "23 And you, Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven, will be brought down to Hades; for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. 24 But I say to you that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for you."

I hope you can see from these examples that we must trust that our God does all things well and that includes the provision of His grace and justice.

- **Jesus came to safe His people from their sins & that means saving them from the judgment to come.**

Those who do not come to Jesus are left to face judgment on the final day:

- **A just judgment because the Apostle Paul clearly tells us that all are without excuse!**

- There are no ‘innocents’ in Adam’s race and without the Grace of God none would be saved.

It is equally hard for us to trust that the just judgments of God are just!

We know some people deserve the Lake of Fire: Surely men like Stalin or Hitler or a woman like Margaret Sanger deserve those fires.

- But must all those they persecuted and killed who did not trust Jesus have to suffer along with them?

I will give you a couple of things to ponder...

- First and foremost, God is a just judge and no one will suffer what they don’t deserve!

Notice that Jesus said it would be better for the people of Sodom on the day of judgment than those ‘nice’ people who lived in His home town!

- Would we have understood that, or even believe that, if Jesus had not pointed it out?

Another thing to keep in mind is how difficult it is for us to understand the vastness of God’s Grace as well. Jesus reminded us about this in one of His final parables given as He confronted those proud religious leaders of His day:

Matthew 20: “1 "For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. 2 Now when he had agreed with the laborers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard. 3 And he went out about the third hour and saw others standing idle in the marketplace, 4 and said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right I will give you.' So they went. 5 Again he went out about the sixth and the ninth hour, and did likewise. 6 And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing idle, and said to them, 'Why have you been standing here idle all day?' 7 They said to him, 'Because no one hired us.' He said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right you will receive.' 8 So when evening had come, the owner of the vineyard said to his steward, 'Call the laborers and give them their wages, beginning with the last to the first.' 9 And when those came who were hired about the eleventh hour, they each received a denarius. 10 But when the first came, they supposed that they would receive more; and they likewise received each a denarius. 11 And when they had received it, they complained against the landowner, 12 saying, 'These last men have worked only one hour, and you made them equal to us who have borne the burden and the heat of the day.' 13 But he answered one of them and said, 'Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius? 14 Take what is yours and go your way. I wish to give to this last man the same as to you. 15 Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with my own things? Or is your eye evil because I am good?'

We tend to focus on the question of whether a ‘nice’ person would be deserving of hell fire, but we don’t often think about the scandalous nature of God’s Grace which Jesus clearly taught here in this parable.

If notorious sinners like Hitler or Stalin or Margaret Sanger came to repentance in the final moments of their lives as we saw with the thief on the cross, then they would not face the torments of the Lake of Fire!

They would be saved because Jesus would have taken their punishment, their full punishment, so the wrath of God against their many sins would be propitiated...

- And all that because of the abundance of His love and grace.

From our human standpoint this disturbs us...

- Just as the equal payments for an hour’s work disturbed those who labored the entire day!
- But such love demonstrates the nature of our Gracious God...

AND it should greatly encourage us to be those beautiful feet that bring the Good News to a dying world!

I will reserve my comments about Lot's wife until next week but I want close with where the text returns to Abraham showing the hope that we should have in the coming of Jesus as the just judge of all the earth!

- The final judgment that is foreshadowed in the fire & brimstone rained down on the cities of Sodom & Gomorrah.

27 "And Abraham went early in the morning to the place where he had stood before Jehovah. 28 Then he looked toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the plain; and he saw, and behold, the smoke of the land which went up like the smoke of a furnace. 29 And it came to pass, when God destroyed the cities of the plain, that God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when He overthrew the cities in which Lot had dwelt."

- God remembered righteous Lot and the prayers of faithful Abraham!

At the Great White Throne Judgment God will be the just judge of all the earth AND God will remember those who are His...

Revelation 20: "11 Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. 12 And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. 13 The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. 14 Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. 15 And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire."

- Brothers and sisters as we contemplate the just judgments of God we should be ever thankful that our names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life.

It is very appropriate that this message comes on the morning that Mary was baptized in the name of the Father the Son and the Holy Spirit: She belongs to Jesus & will be remembered on that judgment day!

As I look around I see many who do not remember the day of their baptism, but rest assured that you were given a new name as well and thus you do not need to fear the Lake of Fire: You are safe in the hands of Jesus as you walk with Him all the days of your life.

- And you, and all of us should be greatly encouraged by the challenge left for us by the writer of the Book of Hebrews:

Hebrews 10: "35 Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward. 36 For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise: 37 "For yet a little while, And He who is coming will come and will not tarry. 38 Now the just shall live by faith; But if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him." 39 But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul."

Communion Meditation: Luke 22

"14 When the hour had come, He sat down, and the twelve apostles with Him...

19 And He took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me." 20 Likewise He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you.