

MINISTRY BY MAIL
Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship
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Second Sunday In Lent, March 8, 2020

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

Hymns: 284, 292:3-4, 285, 293, 48.

Lessons: Jeremiah 26:1-8, Acts 20:19-27, John 15: 17-27.

Sermon Text: Jeremiah 26:7-18.

Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehltrittter

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

How do you behave if you don't want to hear to something? If it's on television or radio you just turn it off or change the station. If it is someone talking in a public place, you may walk away, or if you're really upset, you may join others in expressing your disagreement or dislike for what was said.

Many people react in much stronger, more harsh and even disruptive ways when they hear something they don't like. They don't listen. They mock. They protest. They say and write all sorts of things.

Even though such people today may not insist that the speaker die, their attitude is the same as that of people of Jerusalem in Jeremiah's day. Today we see that

GOD'S SERVANT HAD TOLD THE PEOPLE WHAT GOD TOLD HIM TO SAY BUT ...

- 1. People didn't want to hear what Jeremiah had to say.**
- 2. People didn't want to hear what Jesus had to say.**
- 3. People don't want to hear the same message today.**

Our Old Testament lesson told us that the Word of the Lord came to Jeremiah and told him what to say. His message was one of warning. It was a repetition of the Law of God, and also warned that God would bring disaster on his people if they did not repent of their sins. This was the nation he had chosen to be the nation from whom the Savior of all mankind was to be born.

“Early in the reign of Jehoiakim son of Josiah king of Judah, this word came from the LORD: ‘This is what the LORD says: Stand in the courtyard of the LORD's house and speak to all the people of the towns of Judah who come to worship in the house of the LORD. Tell them everything I command you; do not omit a word. Perhaps they will listen and each will turn from his evil way. Then I will relent and not bring on them the disaster I was planning because of the evil they have done. Say to them, “This is what the LORD says.”’” Jeremiah 26:1-4 (NIV)

Josiah was the last good and pious king of Judah. The worship of the Lord had almost been wiped out by the idolatrous practices of his grandfather and father. He tried to reform the nation, but didn't accomplish much. For a short time after the death of Josiah, Jehoahaz was king, but he was deposed by the Egyptians. They then placed Jehoiakim on the throne. He was a cruel, greedy, materialistic, self-centered man who persecuted and murdered innocent people, including at least one prophet of the Lord, a prophet by the name of Uriah

Jeremiah was to preach every Word of God – everything God said. That's what Jesus did. We too, must do the same. God told Jeremiah to tell everyone who came to the temple exactly what God said. This included a warning on all of them, on the temple, and on the city if they didn't repent.

Jeremiah preached law. We recognize and know that the law of God shows our sinfulness. But sometimes when we hear the Word of God aren't we are thinking and feeling and behaving 'oh, yeah, I know that. Why must I hear it again? I don't want to think about that.' But every one of us must be reminded of God's law and his harsh punishment for breaking his laws. When you read Deuteronomy you see how people who broke God's law were to be put to death.

Jeremiah preached repentance. Do you remember what repentance is? Do you remember from your catechism instruction what the word “repentance” means? First of all, it means sincere, heart-felt sorrow over

our sins and a desire to stop sinning. In a broader sense it means both that sorrow over sins and faith in the forgiveness of sins.

Jeremiah's message was a sharp message of warning. ***"This is what the LORD says: If you do not listen to me and follow my law, which I have set before you, and if you do not listen to the words of my servants the prophets, whom I have sent to you again and again (though you have not listened), then I will make this house like Shiloh and this city an object of cursing among all the nations of the earth."*** Jeremiah 26:4-6 (NIV)

Shiloh is where the tabernacle with the Ark of the Covenant was set up after the conquest of Canaan. Scripture does not give many details, but about 140 years earlier the Philistines captured the Ark and the city was destroyed. Jeremiah repeated God's message which was first delivered during the reign of Josiah. In chapter 7 God told Jeremiah ***"Go now to the place in Shiloh where I first made a dwelling for my Name, and see what I did to it because of the wickedness of my people Israel. While you were doing all these things, declares the LORD, I spoke to you again and again, but you did not listen; I called you, but you did not answer. Therefore, what I did to Shiloh I will now do to the house [in Jerusalem] that bears my Name, the temple you trust in, the place I gave to you and your fathers. I will thrust you from my presence, just as I did all your brothers, the people of Ephraim."*** Jeremiah 7:12-15 (NIV) What a terrible warning!

Jeremiah's message is both a threat and a promise. The threat was that if the people of Judah did not repent, the temple would suffer the same end as the worship center and the city at Shiloh. The promise was that if they repented, the Lord would not carry out his judgment. You see here the Lord's love alongside his threat, his Gospel alongside his Law.

But the people didn't want to hear what Jeremiah had to say. They wanted to kill him. But God intervened when some of the leaders of the people told the priests and the false prophets and the people that Jeremiah was simply saying what God and other prophets had warned about. At the end of the chapter, we read that he ***"was not handed over to the people to be put to death."*** Jeremiah 26:24 (NIV)

Jesus was killed although Jeremiah was spared. ***"Jeremiah said to all the officials and all the people: 'The LORD sent me to prophesy against this house and this city all the things you have heard. Now reform your ways and your actions and obey the LORD your God. Then the LORD will relent and not bring the disaster he has pronounced against you. As for me, I am in your hands; do with me whatever you think is good and right. Be assured, however, that if you put me to death, you will bring the guilt of innocent blood on yourselves and on this city and on those who live in it, for in truth the LORD has sent me to you to speak all these words in your hearing.' Then the officials and all the people said to the priests and the prophets, 'This man should not be sentenced to death! He has spoken to us in the name of the LORD our God.'"*** Jeremiah 26:12-16 (NIV)

In this way, Jeremiah was plainly a forerunner of Christ. Christ preached law. He was not just a "sweet Jesus", kind and loving all the time. He did not ignore sin. Because he was God's own only-begotten Son, he preached what God wanted him to tell people about. Jeremiah also said what God wanted him to tell people about.

When using the example of people who died terrible deaths Jesus said ***"But unless you repent, you too will all perish."*** Luke 13:5 (NIV) John the Baptist preached: ***"Produce fruit in keeping with repentance."*** Luke 3:8 (NIV)

Of course, Jesus also preached the good news of forgiveness. He made it clear that he came to earth to give forgiveness to mankind.

Jesus in his ministry on earth healed people of their diseases. This was a picture of the spiritual healing he brings. He proclaimed the message of repentance, and he proclaimed the gospel of forgiveness.

But people didn't want to hear what Jesus had to say either. Jesus was arrested by the leaders of the people. But there was no one there to rescue him. He was alone. He was killed.

In Jesus day, too, the temple was important to those who attacked him just as they attacked Jeremiah. Their position as leaders in the temple gave them power. But they didn't preach and teach "This is what God says"! Jesus, too, suffered this kind of attacks especially in the last week of his life on earth.

Jesus said ***“But now they have seen these miracles, and yet they have hated both me and my Father. But this is to fulfill what is written in their Law: ‘They hated me without reason.’”*** John 15:24-25 (NIV)

The death of Jesus, God’s only-begotten Son, was part of God’s plan of salvation for all mankind. Those people who rescued Jeremiah reminded the people who wanted to kill him: ***“Micah of Moresheth prophesied in the days of Hezekiah king of Judah. He told all the people of Judah, ‘This is what the LORD Almighty says: ‘Zion will be plowed like a field, Jerusalem will become a heap of rubble, the temple hill a mound overgrown with thickets.’”*** Jeremiah 26:18 (NIV)

Jeremiah was rescued because his mission on earth was not complete. Jeremiah’s life was saved, but Jerusalem was ultimately destroyed by the Babylonians. Jerusalem and the temple was destroyed again – by the Romans – only about a generation after the people there crucified Jesus.

Do people really want to hear the truth from God’s Word today?

People wanted to kill Jeremiah. They actually killed Jesus. Right now, in our nation, people don’t always try to kill Christians. But Christians have been murdered in our country, even in churches in mass killings, as happened in Texas in 2017 and in South Carolina in 2015.

A more visible problem is Christians having their reputation attacked and destroyed when they stand up for the truth of God’s Word. It is easy to forget the eighth commandment. It is so easy to attack someone’s reputation especially today. We have access to instant world-wide communication on ‘social media’. We can write something and it goes out instantly. Sometimes people want to try and retract things that they write in haste, but sometimes the damage has already been done.

People – because of the sinful flesh – don’t want to hear Jeremiah’s message of sin and repentance today.

We could look at what is happening in many churches today. Many reject the idea of homosexuality as sin. These are visible churches we are talking about, not just a legislature arguing. Believable research has shown that homosexuals are only about 4% of society. But society treats that sin as if we must all accept it. It’s hard to watch any prime-time television without this particular sin being represented as perfectly normal.

We are a confessional church and we have agreed that homosexuality, for example, is a sin. But Satan wants to divide us over other matters, too, even Scripture doctrines. The danger is always present in each of us that we want to do what we want to do. We need Jeremiah’s and Jesus’ message of repentance and warning.

God gives us a warning, too. Today the warning is of the coming destruction, catastrophe, disaster of Judgment Day. That is the impending disaster hanging over all men. That devastation and the end of all things except heaven and hell will come upon the world suddenly and unexpectedly.

Just as Jeremiah’s warning of impending disaster came true – the temple was ransacked by the Babylonians – and just as Jesus’ warning came true – the temple and Jerusalem were destroyed about 40 years after Jesus was crucified, so God’s final judgment is coming.

The warnings we hear from the world are of some kind of gradual destruction of our world. But the warnings from God are clear in the Scriptures.

God has love and patience, but it will suddenly come to an end. That end may be judgement day or it may be our own death. Paul told us in our Epistle lesson: ***“I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus.”*** Acts 20:19-27 (NIV) These were Paul’s last words to elders at Ephesus.

We take comfort and have confidence in being saved. But every day Satan, the world, our flesh want to take all that away and substitute something of and from this world.

Jesus was killed because of his message and especially because it was God’s plan of salvation to sacrifice him on the cross.

Listen to God’s warning through Jeremiah! Pay attention to it! Believe it! But above all, believe the Gospel of salvation. Jesus died so that you might live eternally. Today God’s Word comes to you again with the reminder of your salvation! Believe that Word! Repent daily and believe the Gospel!

Then – while you have time – serve God in every way you can. Let eternity be your concern so that you may serve the Lord today and prepare for eternity which may come tomorrow. Amen.