

## Crisis Averted

2<sup>nd</sup> Sun. in Lent – 03/13/22 – Mt. Calvary Luth.

Text: Jeremiah 26:8-15 Pastor Keith Besel

v. 13, [Jeremiah responds to the false accusations against him,] **“Now therefore mend your ways and your deeds, and obey the voice of the LORD your God, and the LORD will relent of the disaster that He has pronounced against you.”**

### Introduction

✘ October 16–28 of 1962: a date that’s probably not as well-known to most people as it should be. In those 13 days, a nuclear world war was averted. It’s remembered as the Cuban Missile Crisis.

→ Much like the crisis going on in Ukraine right now, the Russians; known then as the Soviet Union were the perpetrators. They were shipping nuclear missiles to Cuba, only 99 miles from the US coast. Soviet ships intended to breach a blockade of US Navy ships and deliver their deadly cargoes. An American reconnaissance plane was shot down over Cuba, and a US invasion force was ready to strike.

→ The United States Secretary of Defense later said, “I thought it was the last Saturday I would ever see.” But through intense negotiations between John F. Kennedy and Nikita Khrushchev, included harsh words from each side, the Soviet ships turned around. No nuclear missiles landed or launched. No World War III. The crisis was averted.

✘ In our Old Testament Reading today, God’s people reached a crisis point for their very survival as a nation. And God sent His prophet Jeremiah to speak some very blunt – some might say, “harsh words” to the people. The question is, “Will they heed those words or not? Will the crisis be averted?”

→ And folks, many people today do not know this as well as they should, but we also are on the brink of the same crisis. Spiritually speaking it is one of nuclear proportions; one that also threatens our very survival. So the question before us is the same as the one Jeremiah’s hearers faced, “Will God’s Word preached to us avert the crisis of our eternal disaster or not?”

### I. The Crisis: despising preaching of God’s Word

✘ The crisis we’re talking about is this: the fact that so many of us in this world despise the preaching of God’s Word. Whenever, through whomever this takes place, it creates an eternal crisis. It threatens desolation and damnation.

→ That’s the point that God’s people, the kingdom of Judah, had reached, by the time the events of today’s text took place. There was already a long history of rebellion and neglect toward God that had become deeply rooted among the people of the Kingdom of Israel. They no longer cared about God’s Covenant or the Ten Commandments that God gave them back at Mount Sinai. They forgot who their God was and what He had done for them in delivering them out of Egypt.

→ Now false prophets were deeply entrenched among the religious leaders who spoke whatever the people’s “itching ears” wanted to hear. Any faithful prophets who came to proclaim God’s Word were mistreated, beaten and killed, which is what Jesus was referring to in verse 34 of our Gospel Reading, “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!”

- ✘ As we pick up the events in our text, Jeremiah has just spoken all that the Lord had commanded him to speak to the people. God accused them of creating and following other gods, immoral living, sexual perversion and sins, and evil worship.
  - ➔ They had completely turned their backs against Yahweh and cared little that He had redeemed them out of Egypt and brought them to the Promised Land.
- ✘ Through Jeremiah, the Great I Am now pronounced desolation for Jerusalem and His Temple. He said that “This house,” the temple, “shall be like Shiloh” (v.9).
  - ➔ You see, some 450 years earlier the people of Israel took the Ark of the Covenant – the very presence of God – from its rightful place in Shiloh and carried it into battle against the Philistines. They treated the Ark as if it were a good-luck charm; treating God as if He were nothing more than a lucky rabbit’s foot that they could rub (or parade around) at their pleasure and get whatever they wanted.
  - ➔ Needless to say, God was not pleased with this, so He allowed the Ark to be captured by the Philistines and Shiloh to be decimated and destroyed.
- ✘ Now the people of Judah are doing the same thing. So because of their sin and stubborn lack of faith, Jeremiah proclaims that the Temple and Jerusalem will end up like Shiloh – desolate, laid to ruins, dried up, destroyed, taken away!
  - ➔ Well, even though God is right, the people of Judah liked the false idols they had created by perverting and corrupting God’s Holy Temple. So they did not respond kindly when Jeremiah threatened their idol in the name of God.
- ✘ But God is not to be toyed with; His patience had run out. These enemies of God were now hearing their judgment.
  - ➔ And their reaction was to seize God’s prophet Jeremiah and pass their judgement in verse eight, “You shall die”. The Hebrew word that’s translated there as “die” is מוֹת (“mut”) which refers to death as a penalty for a wrong done, implying that it must be a violent death.
  - ➔ It’s quite a remarkable scene in verses 8-11, with the religious officials snitching on Jeremiah to the secular officials of Judah and then being engulfed by a crowd of people. It makes me think of a playground fight where emotions are high and everyone’s caught up in the fever of name-calling, egging the bullies on and more.
- ✘ Yet Jeremiah does not back down from the task he has been given, even at the risk of losing his life. In verse 12, he says, “Yahweh sent me to prophesy against this house and this city all the words you have heard”.
  - ➔ The Hebrew word for “sent” is שָׁלַח (shalak) which carries the force that the one who is sent is a messenger who has a set purpose assigned to him. Jeremiah speaks directly for Yahweh; giving Yahweh’s message to His people – calling them to repent of their rebellion and unbelief and to return back to the true God. If they will do that and obey the LORD, then the crisis will be averted!
  - ➔ But if they refuse and harm Jeremiah, then the guilt of “innocent blood” (v.15) will be on their hands. The time of crisis is now! They can receive God’s offer of a peaceful resolution or they can refuse and face His eternal judgment.
- ✘ Ever since Adam and Eve’s fall into sin, the whole world has teetered on the edge of a crisis of nuclear proportions. God has sent, and he still sends His messengers – prophets and preachers to proclaim His Word and call His people to turn away from their sin and rebellious, false worship so that the eternal calamity that they deserve may be averted.

- Yet, what has been our response? Have we given up our gods or do we still worship our carnal desires? Have we put our trust in things of plastic and glass and steel or lied and cheated for earthly things that last only a short time. This is rebellion against God.
- Have we heard the voice of our pastor accuse us of our sins and call us to repentance, and yet turned in on ourselves because we neither desire nor intend to do anything but go on in our sin?
- ✘ The answer for each of us is “Yes” in various degrees and ways. Because, as Isaiah 53:6 says, we all “like sheep have gone astray; we have turned – every one – to his own way”. This is the main point of the season of Lent, that we hear God’s Word and readily admit that we are in a crisis; that the wages of sin is eternal death and that, yes, we have sinned and done what is evil in Yahweh’s sight.
  - The crisis is before us! And no “trying to do better” on our part can bring a peaceful resolution.
  - Ah! But there is one way out of this “spiritual nuclear” crisis.

## **II. The Way Out of the Crisis**

- ✘ It is the intervention of the living Word made flesh. When we hear how Jeremiah was brought before the religious and secular leaders of his day, it should remind us of another “messenger”; a “prophet” who was sent by God to proclaim His Word and fulfill His purpose.
  - Remember how the Pharisees and Sadducees, the scribes and chief priests and all the people scurried to their places as Jesus was brought before Pilate; demanding His death?
  - Jesus came and proclaimed all that the Father commanded Him. The Father even declared, “This is My Son, whom I love; listen to Him” (Mat. 17:5).
  - As Jesus taught in His parable of the vineyard in Matthew 21, God sent many prophets to His people; that is His vineyard, to preach repentance and salvation. Yet, each one was beaten and killed. So now He sent His Son as God in the flesh.
- ✘ This is the only way the crisis of our deserved damnation could ever be averted friends – if God Himself were to obey and fulfill the commandments perfectly in our place, and then take the punishment of our sins into His own flesh by shedding His “innocent blood” as payment for our sin and hell.
  - This is the greatest expression of God’s love for us – to avert our crisis. John 3:16-17, “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son. ... For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through Him”.
  - Jeremiah’s “innocent blood” was spared at the time of our text. But our Lord Jesus shed His innocent blood for you and me, and as a result, the Father relented of bringing the crisis we deserve upon us.
- ✘ It’s there, on the cross that Jesus declared, “It is finished!” The debt is paid! Your sins are forgiven! The crisis is averted!

## **III. Crisis Averted in the preached Word**

- ✘ But how does the result of that great work of spiritual diplomacy; that salvation for the souls of mankind actually make it from the cross on Mt. Calvary into your soul and mine now so many years later? Can Jesus’ death really avert my spiritual crisis right now today?

- Yes it can and it does, when you and I hear, take to heart and then believe the preached Word of God today; the Word that still calls us to repentance; the Word that delivers to us the living Word of Jesus Christ.
- ⌘ For the people of Judah, the Word Jeremiah proclaimed was a serious Word from God. Though Jeremiah was not killed, 22 years later the temple and the city of Jerusalem were destroyed just as Jeremiah had warned. Why? because the people never took God's Word to heart.
- In our Epistle Reading Paul writes, "Therefore, my brothers, whom I love and long for...stand firm thus in the Lord" (Phil. 4:1). "Stand firm" means we keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith.
- It means we do not allow ourselves to turn away from Him to follow the false attractions and ways of our culture into the spiritual crisis around us.
- No, Jesus is the only thing needful. He is our life and our salvation! It's His voice that we hear from His prophets when we read His Holy Word; when our pastors proclaim God's truth to us.
- Likewise, when we hear it, He convicts us of our sins, we repent and we turn back to Him in humility, knowing that Jesus has redeemed us by His blood and cleansed us in our baptism to be the adopted children of God!
- ⌘ Yes, the Word both convicts us and alerts us to the crisis we face in our sin, and it also proclaims the answer to averting that crisis in the Word made flesh – Jesus Christ, sacrificed and raised victorious in our place.

## **Conclusion**

- ⌘ Throughout history many crises have been averted and thousands of lives saved. But none are as serious as the crisis of sin and death that every person around the world, in every time since the beginning has had to face head on. And none has been averted so profoundly and soundly as that crisis averted in the shedding of Jesus' innocent blood, death and resurrection.
- His resolution is one of epic proportions, with the promise that our lowly bodies will be raised and transformed to be like Christ's glorious body when He returns on the Last Day. So friends, heed His Word! Return to Jesus and stand firm in the faith. For in Him the crisis is averted! Amen.