

Speaking Faithfully

10th Sun. after Pent. – 08/17/25 – Mt. Calvary Luth.
Text: Jeremiah 23:16-19 Pastor Keith Besel

v. 28, **“Let the prophet who has a dream tell the dream, but let him who has My Word speak My Word faithfully.”**

Introduction

- ✘ I’m not telling you anything you don’t already know when I say that proclaiming, teaching and applying the Word of the Lord can be a tough business. And few people knew that better than the author of this text before us today, the prophet Jeremiah.
 - ➔ When God came and called on him to serve, Jeremiah initially tried to disqualify himself, citing his youth: “Ah, Lord God!” Jeremiah said in chapter 1:6, “Behold, I do not know how to speak, for I am only a youth.” How many of us have used that excuse, “I don’t know how to do it. I’m not gifted in that way. I don’t have the training.” It was the same basic excuse that I used more than once when I was encouraged to become a pastor many years ago.
- ✘ And Jeremiah knew from God Himself that he was doomed to ineffectiveness. God told him that he would preach what God told him to preach, but that the people would not listen. It can’t be any more straightforward than what Yahweh tells Jeremiah in chapter 7:27, “You shall call to them, but they will not answer you.” That was unbearably hard on Jeremiah’s esteem and confidence. In chapter 20:7 he complains to God, “I have become a laughingstock all the day; everyone mocks me.”

I. False peace/hope brings Yahweh’s wrath

- ✘ And to make matters worse, Jeremiah had competition. For every word that he proclaimed, there were many other so-called prophets proclaiming the opposite message; one that was far more popular with the people than the word Yahweh had directed Jeremiah to teach.
 - ➔ Now, the time in which Jeremiah served as a prophet was during the final days of the kingdom of Judah. The ungodly Babylonians were on the cusp of conquering the land and taking the people into captivity, away from the Promised Land. Their faithful king, Josiah, had been killed in battle, and both of the next two kings – Josiah’s sons, “did what was evil in the sight of Yahweh” (2 Kgs. 23:32, 37). This meant that Jeremiah became the target of great suffering and persecution. The king at the time of this text, Jehoiakim, much preferred the messages he heard from the other so-called prophets; the ones who told the people of Judah that they had nothing to fear; that peace and good times were right around the corner, even though anyone that was paying attention to “the news” knew that the Babylonians had already conquered Israel to the north and they were moving their way.
- ✘ You and I, in our current culture and time, might have heard this kind of preaching and teaching called a “market-driven ministry.” It’s been growing in popularity here in America for many years now.
 - ➔ After all, this type of religious message is the logical byproduct of the market-driven world in which we live. If you’ve been on any form of social media for any length of time or even heard of how it works, you know that the various advertisements appearing on your screen are based upon your interests. And how do they know what grabs your attention? By your previous internet searches; by the products you have bought or the online stories and websites you have looked at before. It’s not some type of evil magic conjured up by your cell phone or tablet, but a deliberate partnership between advertisers/retailers and the social media providers. Their goal, they say is “to give us more of what we want.”

- ➔ So if you buy a shirt online, you will see more ads from the same seller offering you similar products. Buy a book, same thing. Buy a hand tool, and you'll soon learn about the entire product line offered by that manufacturer. It's a simple idea of human interaction: give the people what they want. And to be honest, it's not all bad. If you are shopping for tools, you probably are going to be annoyed if you receive a whole bunch of ads for women's blouses. Likewise, if you're looking for a new dress you probably would rather not receive information about the latest options in power drills.
- ✘ But look, this concept is nothing new. It's exactly what was going on 2,500 years ago when the so-called prophets in Jeremiah's day gave the people the kind of messages that they knew they wanted to hear, even if it was the opposite of what they needed to hear.
- ➔ Yahweh sums up their message in verses 16-17: "They speak visions of their own minds, not from the mouth of Yahweh. They say continually to those who despise the word of Yahweh, 'It shall be well with you'; and to everyone who stubbornly follows his own heart, they say, 'No disaster shall come upon you'."
- ➔ Look, no one likes to ponder the impending destruction of their homes and cities. No one really likes to hear that the only way to avoid that outcome is to submit to God in repentance; to return with broken and contrite hearts to the One who saved them and made them to be His set-apart and holy people. It's so much easier; so much more pleasing to our sinful hearts to hear that everything's just going to be alright; that despite the news coming from the north you can just keep on living and acting as you please; that any news of disaster is all just a big lie – "none of that matters, just keep doing whatever makes you happy."
- ✘ That is the deadly lie in all of this, and it lives on in full strength still today. The only thing the people wanted to hear was peace and love and harmony. Never mind the truth! And sadly, the popular "prophets" were all too happy to scratch the people's itch; proclaiming peace and tranquility rather than the judgment and impending wrath to come.
- ➔ But God – He is not out to win a popularity contest. His call quite simply is to be faithful in proclaiming His Word of truth, because that's the word that warns, corrects and leads souls to repentance, faith and eternal salvation.
- ✘ Sadly, the problem Jeremiah faced was not confined to his time. The temptation to give people what they want, rather than what they need, has dogged God's people and God's prophets throughout all of the ages.
- ➔ Proclaiming and sharing God's holy Word ... it's a tough business. We know something needs to be said to this world, so why not just "give them what they want to hear?" That's the temptation. And why? because "if we don't, then they may not like us." "They may go somewhere else" where they can hear what strokes their agenda and ego.
- ✘ But friends, if we surrender to that temptation and we only preach what's popular, what happens? We reduce our Lord to a god made in our own image and we take the place of God instead, and we – along with those who follow our false declarations from God, end up forever separated from God in the eternal torments of hell.
- ➔ In verse 23 Yahweh asks, "Am I a God at hand, declares Yahweh, and not a God far away?" (v 23). Most of us like the idea of a god who is near to us; who serves us the way we want to be served. And in fact the one true God is near to us. He has promised to be with us always. But that message can be so easily twisted and distorted to make God's promise of closeness line up with whatever our heart fancies; whatever desires we may have, so that any distinction between us and God just disappears.

- ➔ Jeremiah counters that fallacy with the message of “a God far away”; a God who knows, as verse 24 says, anything we may try to hide in “secret places.”
- ✘ Yes, the true God and His power and judgment is far beyond our comprehension; is inscrutable beyond anything we can ever imagine.
 - ➔ In His wisdom, this transcendent LORD promises judgment against those who preach their own imaginings. Verses 19-20: “Behold, the storm of the Lord! Wrath has gone forth, a whirling tempest; it will burst upon the head of the wicked. The anger of Yahweh will not turn back until He has executed and accomplished the intents of His heart. In the latter days you will understand it clearly.”

II. Faithful prophesy brings Yahweh’s peace

- ✘ Eventually, in 587 BC the storm did come; judgment did fall upon the false prophets and all those who listened to them. Jerusalem was overrun, the dreams of the so-called prophets became nightmares, and Yahweh’s fiery wrath burned upon the people. All of Jerusalem was destroyed and her people carried away into captivity.
 - ➔ Yet, even in His wrath, God refused to forsake them. Just before this text, in Jeremiah 23:5-6, God gave this life-altering promise to His people: “Behold, the days are coming, declares Yahweh, when I will raise up for David a Righteous Branch, and He shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In His days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely. And this is the name by which He will be called: ‘Yahweh is our righteousness’.”
- ✘ That “Righteous Branch”, as you know, would prove to be the ultimate prophet; the Word of God in human flesh. Like Jeremiah, He – Jesus, stood in the council of Yahweh to see and hear His Word. He proclaimed that Word faithfully; to perfection. And like Jeremiah, He too was opposed by many because of it.
 - ➔ The crowds and culture looked to Jesus to proclaim world peace; victory over their earthly oppressors, but He would not bow to the pressure and preach whatever they wanted to hear. Instead, Jesus proclaimed what they needed to hear; even if it turned families upside down; even if it brought turmoil into the hearts of those who heard Him.
- ✘ Jeremiah had to contend with false prophets, oppression, and lies. Yet he remained faithful to the end. Jesus also had to face the storm of rejection and persecution. Just as Jesus said it would be in our Gospel Reading today, the clouds would rise and the winds would blow (Lk. 12:54–55).
 - ➔ And on a particular Friday, the storm against Jesus finally reached its ultimate climax. And Jesus Himself became the lightning rod for God’s anger against all sin; against all who pervert and misuse His Word; against all who proclaim their dreams rather than the Word of Yahweh.
 - ➔ It’s only as we see Jesus hanging where we should be; paying the price for our punishment, that we “understand clearly” God’s real message for us as He said we would in verse 20. Only in the message of Christ crucified do you and I find what we really need to hear. For it’s there that we see God’s fire (v.29) burn and blaze against sin; against death; against all of the lies within our hearts and minds. It’s there that His hammer (v.29) of truth shatters the prideful rocks of our hardened hearts so that we are prepared in humility and repentance to find and receive God’s gift of true, lasting peace and forgiveness.
- ✘ Yes, God’s wrath is poured out upon Jesus, and in Him we are cleansed and forgiven. Today our God comes to us in His Word proclaimed and His Sacrament of grace; feeding us with everlasting life and giving us true and lasting peace.

Conclusion

- ⌘ Yes, proclaiming, teaching and living by the Word that Yahweh gives to us can be a tough business. Temptations will never cease; pressuring us to water down, dumb down, and adjust the message to suit our desires and the passions of our day.
 - ➔ But, my dear Christians, week after week; over the years we have stood in the council of Yahweh, through His Divine Service; in confirmation and Bible Study and daily devotion. It's there; it's here that we have seen and heard His Word; the Word that we have, and must faithfully proclaim.
 - ➔ As Psalm 119:88 says, it is "in [God's] steadfast love", through the "testimonies of [God's] mouth" that He gives us life! That Word is not driven by the market. It does not change with whatever the current fad or political agenda may be.
- ⌘ No, when God's prophet, whoever that may be, "speaks God's Word faithfully" (v.28), that's the truth that feeds souls with His life-giving grace and forgiveness; the truth that gathers and brings people to faith in Jesus alone as the only true promise of life and salvation fulfilled!
 - ➔ This is the Word, dear friends, that calms our troubles and soothes our aching hearts with the peace of eternity in Paradise with our God and our Lord. To Him be all the glory. Amen.