

Jeremiah, Jesus, and Us
Jeremiah 26:8-15
February 24, 2013

As soon as Jeremiah finished telling all the people everything the Lord had commanded him to say, the priests, the prophets and all the people seized him and said, "You must die! Why do you prophesy in the Lord's name that this house will be like Shiloh and this city will be desolate and deserted?" And all the people crowded around Jeremiah in the house of the Lord. When the officials of Judah heard about these things, they went up from the royal palace to the house of the Lord and took their places at the entrance of the New Gate of the Lord's house. Then the priests and the prophets said to the officials and all the people, "This man should be sentenced to death because he has prophesied against this city. You have heard it with your own ears!" Then 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."

My brothers and sisters in the faith, in this short reading, there are some interesting comparisons to be drawn between Jeremiah and Jesus, and we will discuss these comparisons. We are also going to look at what these similarities between Jeremiah and Jesus have to say to us.

God intends for the Bible to be taken personally. If we view God's Word only from a distance, if we can keep it safely at arm's length, we can block the change the Bible is meant to have on our lives. God doesn't want you to keep his Word on a shelf in the study. God wants you to keep his Word in your heart. With that in mind, let's look at Jeremiah, Jesus, and us.

We join the text just as Jeremiah has just finished delivering a stern warning from God to the people of Israel. Here's what he said, "*Thus says the Lord: If you will not listen to me, to walk in my law that I have set before you, and to listen to the words of my servants the prophets whom I send to you urgently, though you have not listened, then I will make this house like Shiloh, and I will make this city a curse for all the nations of the earth*" (Jer 26:4-6).

I want to focus on the first four words: *Thus says the Lord*. Jeremiah had a message to deliver to the people. But not just any message. He had a message from God. Jeremiah came bearing not his words for the people, but God's words for the people.

If there is one thing that everyone in the world has, it's an opinion. Everyone has their own opinions about almost everything. And that's okay. However, when you go looking for the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, the only opinion you can trust is God's opinion. So, Jeremiah didn't share with the people what he thought. He didn't say to the people, "Now, you listen to me." No. Jeremiah said: *Thus says the Lord*. Now, what about Jesus? What message did Jesus bring? In his account of the Gospel,

John records Jesus saying: *Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works* (Jn 14:10). Like Jeremiah, Jesus came bringing the truth of Heaven, the truth of God the Father. In fact, being God as well as man, Jesus declared himself to be the epitome of truth when he said: *I am the way, the truth, and the life.* (Jn 14:6).

Both Jeremiah and Jesus came bearing witness to the truth of God. What does that say to us? If we had only one thing to say to the world, what would that one thing be; our opinions on various matters, our carefully considered diagnosis of world events, our gems of wisdom bestowed on others so they might improve their lives? I hope not.

If we had just one thing to say to the world, it should be the truth of God. And what might that truth be? *All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God* (Rom 3:23). Nevertheless, God loved the world so much that he gave his only son so that all who believe in Jesus will be saved from damnation to spend eternity with Him (Jn 3:16). So, like Jeremiah and Jesus, we need to carry the message of God's salvation to the world.

The next thing we find in the text is the people's reaction to Jeremiah's message. Let me refresh your memory: *The priests, the prophets and all the people seized him and said, "You must die!"* (v 8).

Well, it would seem the people weren't all that happy with what Jeremiah had to say; even though what he was saying were the exact words of God. Back in verse 2 of chapter 8, God told Jeremiah: *Tell them everything I command you; do not omit a word.*

Jeremiah's message was verbatim from the Lord and the people didn't like it. Why didn't the people like what God had to say? Because what God had to say wasn't what the people wanted to hear. What God had to say demanded that they stop living for themselves and start living for him.

And what about the people's reaction to what Jesus had to say? Did the people accept the words of Jesus better than the words of Jeremiah? Not really. Remember when Jesus announced that he was the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy of the Messiah? The people of his hometown tried to throw him off a cliff (Lk 4:29).

And then there was the time when the people wanted to stone Jesus (Jn 8:59). And who can forget the scene when Jesus stood before the Sanhedrin? The chief priest asked Jesus if he was the Son of God. Jesus answered yes. Then the high priest screams: *Blasphemy, blasphemy, he is worthy of death* (Mt 26:66).

Both Jeremiah and Jesus came with the truth of God on their lips and both Jeremiah and Jesus met fierce opposition. The people of Jesus' day were no more ready to hear the truth than the people of Jeremiah's day.

What does that say to us? When we step out into the world with God's message on our lips, what kind of treatment do you think we should expect? People are people. People are sinful. People don't want to hear what God has to say. They don't even want to hear

the good news of God's plan for their salvation because there's that annoying part about repenting and living godly lives.

The Word of God will always be met with stiff resistance because the Word of God runs contrary to the sinful heart of mankind. However, no matter how intimidating the opposition, Jeremiah stood his ground and boldly proclaimed God's Word. How could Jeremiah be so brave in the face of death threats from people who were capable of carrying out those threats? Jeremiah's courage came from his trust in God. Jeremiah trusted God to do as he had promised.

In the 15th chapter of his book, Jeremiah records God promising him: *I will make you a wall to this people, a fortified wall of bronze; they will fight against you but will not overcome you, for I am with you to rescue and save you* (Jer 15:20). God's promise was good enough for Jeremiah. Jeremiah felt the surety of God's closeness and protection, therefore, he bravely stood against all odds.

Jesus, too, felt the comfort of knowing that the Father was with him. Jesus also had the affirmation of his Father. Remember when Jesus was baptized? The Holy Spirit descended on Jesus while the Father announced to all that Jesus was his pride and joy. And, again, on the mount of Transfiguration, God announced his pleasure in Jesus and that people should listen to what he had to say.

And was this enough to embolden Jesus? When the soldiers came to arrest Jesus, he stood his ground. When questioned by the high priest, Jesus bravely answered in truth. When he was falsely accused, when he was mocked, when he was beaten, Jesus had the courage to endure it all because he knew he was never out of the presence of his Father.

That brings us back to us. Can we trust God enough to have the courage of Jeremiah or Jesus? Do we have the guarantee that we are never alone? The answer to both questions is an emphatic yes.

Jesus called himself our Good Shepherd. He said that a Good Shepherd lays down his life for his sheep. And that's just what Jesus has done for us. Our future is secured in the blood our Savior shed for us. Like Jeremiah and Jesus, we have nothing to fear. The last thing Jesus promised his disciples, and us, was: *All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me ... and surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age* (Mt 28:20).

Our last point of study is the completion of the mission. Jeremiah came to the people to deliver a message from God. He knew the crowd would be hostile. He heard the death threats and he knew they weren't empty threats. Nonetheless, Jeremiah, shored up by the promises of God, carried out his mission. Jeremiah didn't run like Jonah. He didn't hide like Elijah. And he didn't grumble like Moses, when Moses told God the Israelites

were too much to handle. Nope. Jeremiah carried out the mission God had for his life.

Jesus was no different. Jesus faced the angry masses. He put up with the doubting, the questioning, the scheming, the taunts, and the jeers. Jesus came with a message and a mission. He didn't let unruly crowds or undependable disciples divert him. From the day of his incarnation, Jesus towed the mark of God's will. And, mind you, he did all this knowing that a cross was waiting for him at the end of his journey. Jesus had a mission and Jesus fulfilled his mission.

And that brings us to our mission. We do have a mission, you know. And, like Jeremiah and Jesus, we need to carry out our mission. In case you don't know our mission, here it is in the words of our Savior: *Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you* (Mt 28:19-20).

That's our mission. Make disciples of all nations. How do we do that? Baptizing and teaching them. Baptizing them in the name of the Triune God and teaching them, not the teachings of men, not teachings we dream up, but everything that God has to say.

Friends, we take the Word of God into the world, boldly speaking it despite all opposition, trusting the promises of God to keep us safe and carry us through, so we might complete the mission our Lord has for us.

Our church faithfully holds up the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper as beacons to the world offering acceptance into God's family and forgiveness of sins. And we do this not to gain a better seat in Heaven, not to impress other people, not even to make God like us better. We do this because the love of Christ drove him to die for our sins. We do all this because he loved us and died for us while we were still his enemies. We do all this because: *God so loved you and me that he gave his only Son so that if we believe in him we will not die but have everlasting life*" (Jn 3:16 NIV).