

Sermon Proper 15 2019

August 18, 2019

Jeremiah 23:16-29

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father, and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen. This morning we meditate on the Old Testament Lesson from the Prophet Jeremiah, previously read.

Jeremiah is often called the weeping prophet. As you read him, sometimes you could think it's because he sounds like he's whining about his calling from God to be His mouthpiece. And to be fair, Jeremiah was beaten and left for dead, abused in horrible fashion, such that we would likely whine as much or more. But the reason he's called that is because of the sadness he conveys in view of what's coming to Jerusalem. You see the Lord had revealed to Jeremiah that the people were unrepentant. He revealed that they would not repent, and because of that Babylon was going to come and the Babylonians were going to destroy Israel. They were going to come and take the Israelites from their homes and lead them into this captivity in a foreign land. There they would be captives, there they would be slaves, and worst of all, there they would have no access to the Temple. You see, as a whole, the people had rejected the Lord and His Word, so He gave them what they wanted, and Jeremiah knew all of this was coming.

He also knew that plenty of "prophets" weren't warning the people of the truth of what was to come. He knew, as we can see in the lesson, that people were telling them all would be OK. They were telling them that Israel was strong and wouldn't fall to Babylon, couldn't fall to Babylon. They said that God would never let that happen. In other words they made promises that they hadn't gotten from God saying that it was going to be OK. But it wasn't going to be OK. God was going to let them fall. God was strong enough to save them, but they had rejected God and His Word, and so He was angry with Israel. You can hear it in our reading. **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 the Lord will not turn back until he has executed and accomplished the intents of his heart.**

Yes God was angry. In fact, that word for anger there has connections to the word for nostrils. You can get the picture then. God is so angry at their sin, at their

rejection, at the rebellion that, His nostrils are flaring, and like when we get angry, or even more so like when a bull gets angry, He's expressing that anger in the air that's coming out of those nostrils. God was angry. And Jeremiah was one of the few who understood this and was telling the people so.

But how did the people respond? Who did they listen to? Did they listen to Jeremiah? No. They didn't like his negative attitude. He was too much of a downer, so they beat him. They cast him down in a cistern. They threw him out of the city. They didn't like what he had to say and so they kicked him out. And instead who did they listen to? They listened to the other "prophets." They listened to those about whom God said, **"I did not send the prophets, yet they ran; I did not speak to them, yet they prophesied. But if they had stood in my council, then they would have proclaimed my words to my people, and they would have turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their deeds.... I have heard what the prophets have said who prophesy lies in my name, saying, 'I have dreamed, I have dreamed!' How long shall there be lies in the heart of the prophets who prophesy lies, and who prophesy the deceit of their own heart."**

No the people listened to those false prophets because it didn't rile them up so much. It didn't make them cringe or hurt their feelings.

And there's nothing new under the sun, is there? Look at today. Turn on the television and what do you see? When you have people talking about God what are they saying? Look at us. Look at our people with spiritual notoriety, the people on TV who are the experts. We have our Oprahs, and we have our fads. We have those who speak about how we can all find God in our own way, that no matter our spirituality it all points to the same thing. We have the notoriety and reverence that someone like the Dalai Lama receives. Or closer to the Church, we have our Joel Osteens, who makes sure to tell us that if we just trust in God enough we can have our best life now. We can actualize all of the potential that's in us, and bring a slice of heaven into our lives. Did Jeremiah not believe enough? Where was his heaven?

Or look at what we have in the people on what I call "Jesus TV." Maybe they're not saying it's just going to be OK, but they profess to be giving words, prophecies, and visions from God. But are they? Watch someone on there, and if they give some kind of prophecy "from the Lord," look up their name and false prophecy on the

internet. Usually you can find someone who has recorded a word that person has spoken “from the Lord” that was shown to be false—something contradictory to the Scriptures, or a promise that something was going to happen that came to be proven untrue. And do you know what Scripture tells us to do with false prophets? With one who presupposes to speak a word from the Lord yet is proven false? Well in short we to utterly ignore them. In the Old Testament, the call was to stone them, but that’s something given for Israel as a theocracy, not for us as individual Christians. With that in mind we can hear the severity. Don’t listen to those who claim to be speaking for God, but aren’t. Don’t listen to those who don’t speak what His Word does.

Instead listen to His Word. Listen to the call to repentance. Hear what He says to you. For example in the epistle reading, the call that Moses lived by: **By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward.** Hear that call. In fact know what Jesus said, that as you choose to be mistreated with the people of God rather than enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin, this will sadly even divide you within your families: **“Do you think that I have come to give peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division. For from now on in one house there will be five divided, three against two and two against three.”**

Hear that Word. Hear the Word that tells you of the anger of God at sin: **Am I a God at hand, declares the Lord, and not a God far away? Can a man hide himself in secret places so that I cannot see him? declares the Lord. Do I not fill heaven and earth? declares the Lord.** Yes, Christians, hear that Word. And know it.

As I was reading this week, I read something that made the point about this anger, that God’s anger requires satisfaction. That’s a terrifying thought, isn’t it? If God is angry at sin, and His Word tells me of my sin that I should repent, and that Word tells me that His anger requires satisfaction, where should that satisfaction lie? Upon me, right? I’m the sinner. I’m the guilty one. I am the one who should bear that punishment.

When you think about that, when you think about all of this, you can see why The Lord in Jeremiah says that His Word is like fire, **like a hammer that breaks rocks into pieces.**

Let that Word, that hammer crush you. Why? So that once you have been crushed, once you have been brought to nothing, you may see the refuge given to the lowly in the One who bore that satisfaction. In the Gospel Lesson, Jesus speaks of His own anxiety with regard to the baptism with which He was to be baptized. Yet He had already been baptized? Why this fear? Because the completion of His baptism was His death. His death on the cross where all of the anger of God was poured out. All of the sins of the Israelites, all of your sin, your rejection, your rebellion, all of it poured out on Him.

And now He has been raised, and as the completion of His baptism was His death, the completion of His death is His resurrection so that the completion of your baptism might be your resurrection in Him. But your resurrection comes in the burial of your sin in His tomb. In view of that, repentance brings to your realization just how terrible your sin is. It brings to your realization that the wretchedness of that sin shows the depth of His love, and that in that love, you can see the joy of the God whose anger is now satisfied, whose nose no longer flares and fumes at you. You can see the joy of the fulfillment of the One who is faithful.

Continue, then to hear that Word. Continue to hear that Word where you know it will be: in the Holy Scriptures. Don't seek for it in fancy places, in TV spirituality experts, in the sinfulness of your own heart, seek it there, and know what it promises. It doesn't promise it will be OK. Sometimes it won't. Often it won. But in the end, there will be the fulfillment of all it. The eternal joy and freedom of the eschatological kingdom of our Lord Jesus, where everything will be way better than OK, it will be all right. Amen.