

SERMON FOR JUNE 21, 2020

TEXT: JEREMIAH 20:7-13

THEME: WHEN HARDSHIP COMES, PRAISE THE LORD

Sing to the Lord;

praise the Lord!

For he has delivered the life of the needy

from the hand of evildoers.

In the name of Jesus:

Over the next two weeks the Old Testament lessons are recorded in the book of Jeremiah. I thought this might be a good time for us to look at these Old Testament lessons as the basis for the next two sermons, because as Christians living in the 21st century, we don't often read about or hear from this great prophet of the Old Testament. He is considered one of the major prophets along with Isaiah and Elijah. To understand Jeremiah's message, we need to understand the day and time he was living in.

Jeremiah has been called the weeping prophet as well as the iron prophet. He lived between 650-570 years before the time of Christ. He authored the book that bears his name, Jeremiah, as well as Lamentations and some believe he also authored 1 and 2 Kings. He was called by God at an early age to be a prophet, beginning his prophetic work at the age of eighteen. He was a mere child, so to speak, as most men in the Old Testament were not

even allowed to talk about the Scriptures until they had attained the age of thirty.

One would think that being a prophet would have its advantages, but not for Jeremiah! He was unpopular for what he said. Jeremiah used a lot of object lessons for the people, it was like he was delivering children's sermons to the populace all so that they would more easily understand God's Word. But in spite of all of this, Jeremiah and his message was rejected. No matter how often Jeremiah spoke God's Word to the people, the people rejected God.

Jeremiah probably felt as if he deserved better. After all, he was serving God, he was telling the people what God wanted them to hear. But the people didn't want to hear what God wanted them to hear, they wanted to hear what they wanted to hear. It was a classic case of people hearing what they wanted to hear, not what they needed to hear.

And what was it that they didn't hear? They were hearing God's call through Jeremiah that the people needed to change, they needed to repent. But they turned a deaf ear. The nation, its kings, and its prophets all rejected God and desired to go along with the crowd. They devoted themselves to idolatry, to idol worship, in direct violation of the First Commandment which says: You shall have no other gods. If they weren't going to listen, God would

punish, just as He promised when He gave the Ten Commandments to Moses: “I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity upon the third and fourth generation.” God was not joking. If the people would not listen, God would reject them and send them off to a foreign land as captives.

Jeremiah tried to tell them, but to no avail. For as often as Jeremiah proclaimed God’s Word telling the people to repent, there were many false prophets who said otherwise. “Don’t worry about it,” they said. “Jeremiah has it all wrong. God isn’t going to punish you. He loves you. You don’t need to change, rather, we need to change our message and change God’s Word.” And that is what they did, the false prophets said all was well, that worshipping other gods was okay, other nations do it, so it must be alright.”

Jeremiah was on an island, all alone. His family and friends had forsaken him. But he continued to rely on God and proclaim His Word. The authorities of the day, the kings and priests did everything they could to break Jeremiah’s spirit. They tortured him, they tried to inflict upon him mental and spiritual anguish, telling him that he was wrong, that God was not on his side, they were on the side of God. But true to his nickname as “the Iron Prophet” Jeremiah was immovable. In spite of all sorts of rejection and opposition, Jeremiah remained true and faithful to God.

Many times we as Christians can relate to how Jeremiah felt. After all, we have been called to be God's children. We believe in Jesus, we seek to follow Him and do His will. But like Jeremiah, things don't always work out for us. We live in a world where right is considered wrong and what is wrong is said to be right. It is as if there is someone working against us, so even though we place our faith in Jesus, we still face a daily onslaught of trials, tribulations, and disappointments.

The Bible identifies this evil foe, he is the devil or Satan, God's adversary and a lover of all that is evil and false. He is alive and well and is described as the prince of this air, like a lion on the prowl seeking anyone and everyone to devour them.

But Jeremiah never lost hope, and neither should we! Why? Because God's love endures forever. Jeremiah looked forward to that Day when God would make all things right. And God did, in sending His Son Jesus to battle sin, Satan, and death through His innocent life, suffering, and death. Jesus came to suffer what the injustices that Jeremiah suffered, yet without sin. Jeremiah's looked forward to that Day when God would make all things right in Jesus. Jeremiah wrote: "Behold, *the* days are coming," declares the Lord

“When I will raise up for David a righteous Branch; And He will reign as king and act wisely And do justice and righteousness in the land. **6** In His days Judah will be saved, And Israel will dwell securely; And this is His name by which He will be called, ‘The Lord our righteousness.’”

Jeremiah was assured that God was on his side. And the Good News is that God is on your side too! The evidence of God’s love for you is His Son Jesus. You have been baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Your sins have been washed away and the Holy Spirit has given to you a good conscience. You will receive the true Body and Blood of Jesus today in the Sacrament. You will once again taste and see that the Lord is good, that His mercy lasts forever because you can leave here in peace and the certainty of God’s forgiveness. Today Jesus speaks His Word to you. Your sins are forgiven. You belong to Him. He is with you always.

This world has its shares of troubles. Jesus promised as much when He said that in this world you will have trials and tribulations. But, Jesus said, you can be of good cheer, because Jesus has overcome the world. So in the midst of trials and tribulations, you can rejoice and praise God! For God’s love for you in Jesus is never ending. And He is at work today through the

power of His Word. His Word will not return to Him empty. It will accomplish what He wants. God's will WILL be done, and that is enough reason for us to Sing to the Lord; sing praises to the Lord, for He has delivered us from the hands of our Enemy, and you belong to Jesus forever.

Amen