

SERMON FOR JUNE 28, 2020

TEXT: JEREMIAH 28:5-9

THEME: WHO DO YOU BELIEVE?

5 Then the prophet Jeremiah spoke to Hananiah the prophet in the presence of the priests and all the people who were standing in the house of the Lord, **6** and the prophet Jeremiah said, "Amen! May the Lord do so; may the Lord make the words that you have prophesied come true, and bring back to this place from Babylon the vessels of the house of the Lord, and all the exiles. **7** Yet hear now this word that I speak in your hearing and in the hearing of all the people. **8** The prophets who preceded you and me from ancient times prophesied war, famine, and pestilence against many countries and great kingdoms. **9** As for the prophet who prophesies peace, when the word of that prophet comes to pass, then it will be known that the Lord has truly sent the prophet."

In the name of Jesus:

The prophet Jeremiah has been called a lot of names. The "Weeping Prophet" because he wrote the book of Lamentations and wept over Jerusalem, the "Iron Prophet" because of his steadfastness in proclaiming God's Word to a wayward people, and today he is known as a "True Prophet" because the Lord truly sent him to speak His Word.

Remember that to understand Jeremiah we need to look at the historical context in which he was placed. He was the last great prophet in the Kingdom of Judah before the Kingdom's destruction and captivity. The

Kingdom of Judah fell and most of its inhabitants were hauled off to Babylon as punishment for their rejection of the one True God, Yahweh. The king of Judah, its people and religious leaders rejected Yahweh, so Yahweh handed them over to their enemies. King Nebuchanezzar of Babylon invaded Judah, taking the best the Kingdom had to offer, its gold, the riches of the Temple, and the brightest and best of the people. Only some elderly and invalids were left behind in Jerusalem. The once shining city of Kings, Jerusalem, was ransacked and became a ghost town.

Hannaiah was a prophet during this time, but don't be deceived, he wasn't like Jeremiah. Hannaiah was a false prophet. He spoke false words and gave false hope and comfort to those who heard him. Jeremiah had continued to speak the cold, hard truth to the people of Judah. He foretold of the coming day of judgement, a day when the nation of Babylon would come to destroy the kingdom of Judah. Jeremiah was brutally honest, as God gave him this word to say: "Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: This is what you shall say to your masters: **6** Now I have given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, my servant, and I have given him also the beasts of the field to serve him. **7** All the nations shall serve him

and his son and his grandson, until the time of his own land comes. Then many nations and great kings shall make him their slave.

8 ""But if any nation or kingdom will not serve this Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and put its neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon, I will punish that nation with the sword, with famine, and with pestilence, declares the Lord, until I have consumed it by his hand. **9** So do not listen to your prophets, your diviners, your dreamers, your fortune-tellers, or your sorcerers, who are saying to you, 'You shall not serve the king of Babylon.' **10** For it is a lie that they are prophesying to you, with the result that you will be removed far from your land, and I will drive you out, and you will perish. **11** But any nation that will bring its neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon and serve him, I will leave on its own land, to work it and dwell there, declares the Lord.""

What we have here is a war of words. God tells Jeremiah to speak the truth, that captivity is coming. The kingdom of Judah will not be able to escape it. So get used to it, says the Lord, and prepare yourselves for a long captivity, build homes in Babylon and seek the welfare of the nation of Babylon, because you are going to stay awhile and won't be leaving for almost 70 years. This is the Word that the Lord gave Jeremiah to proclaim, and

Jeremiah did what he was told to do. He told the truth. Unlike Hannaiah. For while Jeremiah was telling the people the cold hard truth, many like Hannaiah told a different story. The false prophets like Hannaiah told the people not to worry. Nothing was wrong. All was well, Jeremiah was an attention getter, a liar, so there was no need to listen to him.

Well now, who was telling the truth? Jeremiah was, which is why he exclaimed: “**8** The prophets who preceded you and me from ancient times prophesied war, famine, and pestilence against many countries and great kingdoms. **9** As for the prophet who prophesies peace, when the word of that prophet comes to pass, then it will be known that the Lord has truly sent the prophet.” The words of Jeremiah came to pass, Hanniah wasn’t telling the truth, he was a false prophet, and Hannaiah died a few months later.

So who do you believe? That is the question! We live in a world of so many messages. Mixed messages and messages that are just plain wrong. Just as in Jeremah’s day and age, there are people who claim to speak for God. But they don’t. These false prophets are like Hanniah, they will tell us what we want to hear, not what we need to hear. Their messages are not based on the Word of God. They preach about earthly peace and prosperity. Believe in

God and all your dreams will come true. Martin Luther calls these false prophets theologians of glory. They call evil good and good evil. They don't speak about Jesus and the cross, but they use Jesus for their own means and goals. These false prophets are arrogant, they take pride in themselves and seek their own glory and welfare. So who do you believe? Not the false prophet who doesn't speak God's Word in its completeness.

The true prophet, like Jeremiah, speaks the Word of God in season and out of season. The true Prophet tells people what they need to hear. As a true prophet, Jeremiah didn't seek his own welfare. His mind and life were held captive to the Word of God. Jeremiah pointed people to the True Prophet, the Greater Prophet, One sent by God to speak the Word of God and to do His will. That true Prophet that Jeremiah pointed to, and the One who we need to listen to and follow is Jesus.

Jesus is God's Word to sinners. Jesus in the Gospel lesson today tells us that He didn't come to bring peace to the earth but a sword! He came to earth to do battle with Satan and defeat Him through His life, suffering, death, and resurrection. He doesn't make friends with evil, He defeats evil, overcoming

evil not with evil, but with love and forgiveness. Jesus doesn't compromise the truth, He tells the truth. And what is the truth?

This is the truth, that Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth. Jesus came to do the will of the One who sent Him. God loved the world so much that He sent Christ to save the world from sin, Satan, and death. The wages of sin is death. Not one of us is righteous, but Jesus is the Lamb of God sent to take away all of our sins. In Jesus you have been chosen by God. He is the Prince of Peace who gives peace that the world cannot give. The peace that Jesus gives is that He gives you a clean conscience so that you will know that you are God's child now and forever and that nothing will ever separate you from His love. He has called you by name. He invites you to follow Him.

Following Jesus doesn't mean that your life will be a bed of roses. Like Jesus, you will be opposed for your faith and some may be openly hostile towards you for what you believe and stand for. But Jesus calls you to take up your cross and follow Him. You have the assurance of His power and presence for He says: "Whoever receives you receives me, and whoever receives me receives him who sent me." And you have the assurance that in following

Jesus, you are living for Him, doing the works He has called you to do in loving and serving others, so that by being faithful to Christ unto death, you will receive the crown of everlasting life.

There is a wonderful portion of our liturgy that speaks to this. Please turn in the LSB to Divine Service One. I want to direct your attention to the Verse that we sing as we prepare to hear the Gospel lesson for the day. Note the words: Lord to whom shall we go, you have the words of eternal life. This is a quote from the Gospel of John. In John 6, many of Jesus' disciples turned away and no longer followed Jesus. John then records this: "**67** So Jesus said to the twelve, "Do you want to go away as well?" **68** Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, **69** and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God." We sing this verse before we hear the Gospel as a prayer, Lord, to whom shall we go, You have the words of eternal life. " There is only One who has these words, and only One who we need to listen to, Jesus. Faith comes by hearing, so listen to Jesus, so that by hearing His Word you might believe in Him and have life by His name.

Amen