

**Holy Cross, Daggett and St. Mark, Wallace Lutheran Churches, Michigan**

**The Fifth Sunday after Pentecost**

**July 9, 2017**

**Jeremiah 19:14-20:13**

*Then Jeremiah came back from Topheth, where the LORD had sent him to prophesy, and he stood in the court of the LORD's house and said to all the people: "This is what the LORD of Armies, the God of Israel, says. Watch, I will bring on this city and on all its towns every disaster that I have declared against it, because they have become stiff-necked, refusing to hear my words."*

*Now Pashhur the priest, the son of Immer and the chief officer in the house of the LORD, heard Jeremiah prophesying these things. Pashhur had Jeremiah the prophet beaten, and he put him in the stocks at the Upper Benjamin Gate at the house of the LORD. The next day when Pashhur released him from the stocks, Jeremiah said to him, "The LORD does not call you Pashhur, but Magor-Missabib, for this is what the LORD says: Watch, I will make you a terror to yourself and to all your friends. They will fall by the sword of their enemies before your very eyes. I will hand Judah over to the king of Babylon. He will carry them captive to Babylon, and he will kill them with the sword. Also the riches of this city, all its property, and all the treasures of the kings of Judah—I will give it all away into the hands of their enemies. They will plunder these things, seize them, and carry them off to Babylon. As for you, Pashhur, and all who live in your house, you will go into captivity. You will go to Babylon! You will die there, and you will be buried there, you and all your friends to whom you have prophesied falsely."*

*You persuaded me, LORD, and I was persuaded. You are stronger than I am, and you prevailed. I have become a laughingstock all day long, and everyone mocks me. Whenever I speak, I call out. I call out, "Violence and destruction!" because the word of the LORD has brought me insult and mockery all day long. If I say, "I will not mention him or speak in his name any more," then there is a burning fire in my heart, shut up in my bones, and I am weary of holding it in. I cannot! I hear many whispering, "Terror on every side!" "Denounce him! Let's denounce him," say all my close friends, those who are watching for my fall. "Perhaps he will be persuaded, then we will prevail against him and we will take our revenge on him." But the LORD is with me like a fearsome warrior. So my persecutors will stumble and they will not prevail. They will be utterly ashamed because they have failed. Their eternal dishonor will never be forgotten. LORD of Armies, you who test the righteous, who see the heart and the mind, let me see your vengeance on them, for I have revealed my cause to you. Sing to the LORD! Praise the LORD, for he has delivered the life of the needy from the grasp of the wicked.*

What am I getting punished for? I was in the right. My popular coworker was in the wrong. She was stealing. She wrote extra expenses which didn't exist to her reports and pocketed them herself. She kept writing in extra hours she didn't work. It isn't fair. I caught her and reported her, but she lied about everything and blamed me. It didn't matter that I had proof she was wrong. Now, my job is being threatened and people have stopped talking to me at work.

Have you ever gotten punished for doing the right thing in God's eyes? It happened to Jeremiah in our Old Testament lesson this morning. God had chosen Jeremiah to be his prophet, but doing the right thing in God's eyes made a lot of people unhappy. **"Then Jeremiah came back from Topheth, where the LORD had sent him to prophesy, and he stood in the court of the LORD's house and said to all the people:**

**"This is what the LORD of Armies, the God of Israel, says. Watch, I will bring on this city and on all its towns every disaster that I have declared against it, because they have become stiff-necked, refusing to hear my words."** God gave Jeremiah a message which he wanted Jeremiah to share with his people. The Jews had disobeyed God and God had finally run out of patience with them. God was going to punish the people and send them into exile.

Jeremiah did what God wanted him to do. He shared God's message with God's people and what happened to Jeremiah? **"Now Pashhur the priest, the son of Immer and the chief officer in the house of the LORD, heard Jeremiah prophesying these things. Pashhur had Jeremiah the prophet beaten, and he put him in the stocks at the Upper Benjamin Gate at the house of the LORD."** Jeremiah went to God's house, shared God's message with God's people and was beaten because he spoke the truth.

How was that fair? Jeremiah was punished for doing the right thing in God's eyes. How could God allow this happen? Didn't he care about Jeremiah? Didn't he want to protect him? Jeremiah certainly wondered this to himself. He says, **"You persuaded me, LORD, and I was persuaded. You are stronger than I am, and you prevailed. I have become a laughingstock all day long, and everyone mocks me."**

**"Whenever I speak, I call out. I call out, 'Violence and destruction!' because the word of the LORD has brought me insult and mockery all day long."** Jeremiah is struggling with the reality that sharing the truth of God's word with others brings him trouble. He believes what God says is correct, but he is distressed because no one seems to listen to him. All they do is mock him, insult him, beat him and throw him into prison. He was doing what is right in God's eyes. What was he getting punished for?

Have you ever gotten punished for doing what is right in God's eyes? It might be at work. You work as hard as you can. You show up on time. You leave when you're supposed to. You take the exact amount of time you're supposed to take on break. You don't take items home from work because you "deserve" them. You speak up when you see your fellow workers being lazy or not giving their all. You do your best to represent your savior by the hard work you put in.

Yet, what can sometimes happen when you do these things? Don't some of your coworkers sometimes make you a target? They might insult you behind your back by giving you a cruel nickname. Or maybe they bad mouth you to your boss because your hard work makes them look bad. They might even lie

about you in order to get you in trouble. Your hard work and faithfulness to your God who gave you your job gets you punished. How is this fair?

It isn't fair, but it teaches us an important lesson. Christians sometimes suffer simply because they are being faithful to God. Jeremiah helps us understand. **"I hear many whispering, 'Terror on every side!' 'Denounce him! Let's denounce him,' say all my close friends, those who are watching for my fall. 'Perhaps he will be persuaded, then we will prevail against him and we will take our revenge on him.'"** Jeremiah reveals people were mad at him because they didn't want their sinful actions exposed.

People haven't changed since Jeremiah's day. They don't like having sinful actions exposed. Sometimes laziness is exposed by a hardworking coworker. Or a gossiping tongue is exposed by someone who says something about it. Or the person who gets caught leaving work early and trying to get paid for work they didn't do. You might have faced this anger when confronting someone about their sinful actions. They get mad at you, make an excuse or try to get you in trouble.

How can we remain faithful to God with this threat hanging over us? **"If I say, 'I will not mention him or speak in his name any more,' then there is a burning fire in my heart, shut up in my bones, and I am weary of holding it in. I cannot! The LORD is with me like a fearsome warrior. So my persecutors will stumble and they will not prevail. They will be utterly ashamed because they have failed. Their eternal dishonor will never be forgotten."**

Jeremiah was struggling with being punished for doing what was right in God's eyes. He was tempted to just give up and stop speaking in God's name, but he didn't because he understood who he was serving. He was serving the Lord and the Lord had convinced him of a certain promise. **"Sing to the LORD! Praise the LORD, for he has delivered the life of the needy from the grasp of the wicked."** Jeremiah was convinced God would rescue him from the wicked.

The thing about this rescue is that it isn't a physical rescue. Jeremiah's enemies could have ended up killing him. However, Jeremiah's enemies could not destroy his soul. **"The LORD is with me like a fearsome warrior. So my persecutors will stumble and they will not prevail. They will be utterly ashamed because they have failed. Their eternal dishonor will never be forgotten."** Jeremiah trusted God would eternally deliver him from sin's wickedness.

Jeremiah calls the Lord a fearsome warrior. Who are his opponents? They aren't flesh and blood. No, they are the evil forces of this world. The Lord fought and defeated, sin, death and the devil by the blood of his son. He has won the battle on your behalf and mine. This victory is the reason Jeremiah sang the Lord's praises. The Lord has defeated every wicked plan and scheme which man has ever or will ever devise and he promises to rescue and deliver his followers from every evil in this world.

Jeremiah was punished by a man named Pashhur. God gave Jeremiah a specific promise about this wicked man. **"The next day when Pashhur released him from the stocks, Jeremiah said to him, 'The LORD does not call you Pashhur, but Magor-Missabib, for this is what the LORD says: Watch, I will make you a terror to yourself and to all your friends. They will fall by the sword of their enemies before your very eyes. I will hand Judah over to the king of Babylon.'"**

**“As for you, Pashhur, and all who live in your house, you will go into captivity. You will go to Babylon! You will die there, and you will be buried there, you and all your friends to whom you have prophesied falsely.”** The Lord revealed to Jeremiah that Passhur would personally suffer because he persecuted Jeremiah. Passhur would see his friends die, be carried off to a foreign land and die in said foreign land because he had persecuted God’s prophet.

You and I don’t have a direct promise about the people who persecute us from God. Yet, God promises those people who persecute his children will get what they deserve (unless they repent of their sins). God does not enjoy seeing Christians suffer persecution, but persecution reminds us sin is still in this world and earth is not our eternal home. Heaven is. May God remind us of this important truth and bless our efforts to live as his children in this world. Even when faithfulness brings persecution. Amen.