

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

**February 24, 2013**

**Jeremiah 26:8-15**

*But 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."*

Have you ever been sent to do something specific? Maybe you've been sent to the store with specific instructions to buy something for mom or dad and if you didn't they would be rather unhappy with you. Maybe you have been sent to an airport to pick someone specific up. Maybe you have been sent to the post office to mail important tax documents or a large present for a grandchild or a care package to a friend.

Maybe you've been sent to the bank to put money into your checking account. Maybe you've been given a remote control which you are supposed to carry to grandpa. You ever done any of these things? Jeremiah was during his lifetime. He was sent to be God's prophet who would carry God's message to the people of Judah. What was the message Jeremiah was supposed to give to the people of Judah?

"The word of the Lord came to me, saying, 'Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations.' 'Ah, Sovereign Lord,'" I said, "I do not know how to speak; I am only a child.' But the Lord said to me, 'Do not say, 'I am only a child.' You must go to everyone I send you to and say whatever I command you. Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you and will rescue you,' declares the Lord."

"Then the Lord reached out his hand and touched my mouth and said to me, 'Now, I have put my words in your mouth. See, today I appoint you over nations and kingdoms to uproot and tear down, to destroy and overthrow, to build and to plant.'" God chose Jeremiah to be his prophet and to call God's people to repentance. This wasn't an easy job. Why? The people of Judah didn't think they were doing anything wrong in God's sight and didn't want anyone to tell them what they were doing was wrong.

Where did Jeremiah's confidence come from? It came from the Lord because the Lord had promised him, "But the Lord said to me, 'Do not say, 'I am only a child.' You must go to everyone I send you to and say whatever I command you. Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you and will rescue you,' declares the Lord." This promise showed Jeremiah God's love for Jeremiah which called him to be his servant, but it also showed his power over him to protect him and God's power made Jeremiah unafraid.

Jeremiah shows he is unafraid by saying, "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." Jeremiah was confident because he knew he was faithful to the specific task the Lord had given him and the Lord would be faithful to him and protect him.

Jeremiah was confident because he trusted in the Lord's love. He knew the Lord wouldn't let him down. Did you know the Lord has given us the same specific task he gave to Jeremiah? The Lord has sent us to prophesy and tell others about him. Where do we find our motivation to share him? We find it in the same place Jeremiah did. We find it in God's love and power for us. God has shown us his love by calling us to be his children.

We were born in our sins and as a result we were God's fierce enemies. We wanted nothing to do with him, but in his love and his mercy God has called us to be his children. He brought many of us into his family when our parents brought us to the baptismal font and the pastor baptized us in the name of the

Father, Son and Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit used this sacrament to create faith in our hearts and make us spiritually alive.

The Holy Spirit used different means for others of us. He might have used a friend, relative or a spouse to witness to us and tell us about God's love for us. He might have used a chance encounter with a stranger or simply guiding us to walk into a church one day. Whatever method he used the result was the same: the Holy Spirit convicted us of our sins, but assured us we have peace with God through Jesus' sacrifice for us and we should trust in this love God has shown to us.

Once the Holy Spirit has convinced us of God's love in our lives he helps us see how God uses his power to protect and sustain us. He reminds us how God allows us to drive safely to and from work in the midst of a snow storm. He shows us how God's powerful hand provides heat for us in winter, cooling in summer and food to make sure we see both summer and winter. God's power and love help motivate us to serve him by sharing with others all of God's word.

Jeremiah shows us how to do this. He is unafraid to share with the people God's harsh and stinging law. He points out their sins to them because God has told him to do so. He doesn't change the message. He doesn't ask why he should. He just does, but what kind of reaction does he get? "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."

Why did Jeremiah need to share God's harsh law with them? The Judahites were convinced since they lived in Jerusalem where the Lord's temple was that God wouldn't destroy his own temple and because they lived where God's temple was they could live however they wanted to and God wouldn't care. But they were dead wrong. God did care and he was extremely angry with the Judahites and their sins and he was ready to send them into exile.

Jeremiah proclaims, "This is what the Lord says: If you do not listen to me and follow my law, which I have set before you, and if you do not listen to the words of my servants the prophets, whom I have sent to you again and again (though you have not listened), then I will make this house like Shiloh and this city an object of cursing among all the nations of the earth." But why would the Lord proclaim such harsh law? He did it so the people would be crushed by their sins and repent of them.

"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." The Lord promised to have mercy on the people if they would repent and change their ways by following and obeying him. Jeremiah's was specifically sent to proclaim both God's law, but also God's gospel which assures repentant sinners they are forgiven.

God has given us this specific task too. He charges us to bring his message of law and gospel into the world just like Jeremiah. But what kind of people will we run into when we do? Well, we will run into people who don't believe in absolute truth. We will run into people who believe what they are doing is good and right in God's sight because everyone else is doing it and if everyone else has decided it is ok to do why should God or I be any different?

We are going to run into people who won't like hearing God is angry with them over their sins. People who call God a mean and unloving bully who hates people because he would dare to send them to hell and won't let them do whatever they want. We will run into people who are desperate to hear God's word. How do I know this? I am just like the examples I've mentioned and I'm looking out at people who are like them too because we are all sinners who think this way at one time or another.

What do we do in the face of such stiff and fierce opposition? We remember God's love for us. We remember how Jesus stood tall in the face of such opposition and pressed on to win our salvation. He didn't back down because he was afraid. He didn't back down because he knew if he did it would mean your salvation and mine would go out the window. Jesus knew that if he gave up it would mean we would be stuck in our sins and unable to get out of them and we would be sentenced to hell.

We remember Jesus' love which allowed him to take our place and take all of God's wrath for us. We remember his death has made us God's children and his resurrection assures us we are truly forgiven in God's sight. We remember we have been sent to share not only God's law, but also his gospel which reminds us about God's love for us and how we are forgiven sinners in God's sight. Why is it important to remember God's gospel?

It is what gives us confidence to do the task he has given us and share his message with others. It is where we place our hope and trust. We don't place it in our own talents and abilities. We place it in God and his message. We remember, "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."

We all will be given a specific task to do sometime during our lives. It might be going and buying something for our parents, picking up someone from the airport, going to the bank, going to the post office or you name it, but I pray we never forget God's specific task for us. He has sent us to share his message because we trust in his powerful love for us and because he gives us the courage to witness him boldly. Amen.