

INI

St. Paul's Lutheran Church
2100 16th Street SW
Austin, MN 55912-1749
Pastor Ted Barthels
Sermon preached on
July 16, 2017
6th Sunday after Pentecost

Scripture Lessons: Romans 6:1b-11; Matthew 10:34-42

Hymns: 537; 409; 310; 313:3

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: Jeremiah 28:5-8

Then the prophet Jeremiah spoke to the prophet Hananiah in the presence of the priests and in the presence of all the people who stood in the house of the LORD, ⁶and the prophet Jeremiah said, "Amen! The LORD do so; the LORD perform your words which you have prophesied, to bring back the vessels of the LORD's house and all who were carried away captive, from Babylon to this place. ⁷Nevertheless hear now this word that I speak in your hearing and in the hearing of all the people: ⁸The prophets who have been before me and before you of old prophesied against many countries and great kingdoms—of war and disaster and pestilence. ⁹As for the prophet who prophesies of peace, when the word of the prophet comes to pass, the prophet will be known *as* one whom the LORD has truly sent." (NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

In Christ Jesus, God our Savior, dear fellow Redeemed:

INTRO: Jeremiah's Ministry

In our gospel lesson this morning Jesus warned of confrontation that would come with following Him as Lord and Savior. Jesus made it clear that one could not choose both the way of the world and following Christ. If one sought to save this temporal; life (that is be true to oneself, to be whom I want to be, to live as I would like to live) then one would be in danger of losing eternal life. It is only when one denies self and takes up his cross and follows Jesus, taking up the burden of the cross of Christ, thereby sacrificing one's life in the here and now, that one is assured of possessing eternal life through faith in Christ Jesus.

In our text we find Jeremiah, who was a prince in Judah, doing just that. The Lord called Jeremiah to be His prophet at a young age, and Jeremiah was to present God's Word faithfully to the people. He was to warn of judgment to come because of the nation's sin and impenitence.

To say it was an unpopular message is an understatement. One of Jeremiah's contemporaries named Urijah was killed because he was faithfully presenting the Word of God presenting the same message Jeremiah presented. Jeremiah himself suffered much for the Lord.

At the beginning of the reign of King Zedekiah, the last king of Judah, God instructed Jeremiah to construct yokes like oxen would wear, and bonds like prisoners would wear. Jeremiah was instructed to wear a set of these yokes and bonds around his neck. They were to serve as a continuing reminder of the message of judgment Jeremiah proclaimed.

Against this message another prophet named Hananiah arose who presented a very positive message of deliverance and better days that were soon coming for Judah and Jerusalem. This message was very popular and well received. One might say it was even regarded as evangelical because it was such "good news."

And that is the crux of our lesson today. What is --

THEME: True Evangelical Preaching?

We will draw that lesson from Jeremiah who we see --

I. Standing up for the Truth against Error.

The events of our text took place right in the temple courts when there was a great assembly. The king and princes had their own entrance and hall into the temple, and the citizens of Jerusalem were also present, filling the temple courts when Hananiah declared that he had a message from the Lord. Hananiah declared that within two years those who had been transported to Babylon would be returned along with all the consecrated temple articles that had been looted by the Babylonians. That was good news indeed, except it wasn't true. And there Jeremiah was, standing with the princes in the king's gate with that awkward yoke still around his neck as it had been for at least a couple of years. What should Jeremiah do? He must have been aghast at what he heard, but Hananiah had declared that this message was from the Lord and the multitude of the people and the assembly of the princes and the king were all buoyed in their spirits by such good news! What should a true preacher of the God's Word do in the face of a lie?

Jeremiah stood up to Hananiah. He began by saying, "*Amen! May the Lord do this,*" but then Jeremiah continued with the reminder that in the past God had sent forth His prophets with warnings of judgment in response to sin and impenitence. Jeremiah pointed out that when a prophet announces peace the people will see if it is true if peace comes. Jeremiah with his yoke around his neck was a living reminder for everyone there that God had **not** declared peace, but **judgment**, and **pestilence**, and **destruction** for Jerusalem, and even the temple.

Hananiah was angered by Jeremiah standing up to him, and he removed and broke the yoke Jeremiah wore and then repeated the lie, a message of peace that had not come from the Lord. This message was not the message the people of Judah needed to hear, as nice and heartwarming and encouraging, and welcome as it might be.

But did Jeremiah have to cause such a scene, standing up right in the middle of the temple service? Absolutely, because that is what Hananiah had done, interrupting the temple service for maximum effect with his lies.

True evangelical preaching properly distinguishes between the law and the gospel, and applies them according to the Lord's instruction. True evangelical preaching stands up for the truth against the false teachings found within the church. Yes, that makes people uncomfortable, but it is necessary. It is necessary because the false messages proclaimed from Christian pulpits today across America and throughout the world sound good and loving and warm and encouraging, but they are not the message that has been given us by God. The Lord Himself declared:

“Behold, I am against the prophets,” says the Lord, ‘who use their tongues and say, “He says.” Behold, I am against those who prophesy false dreams,’ says the Lord, ‘and tell them, and cause My people to err by their lies and by their recklessness. Yet I did not send them or command them; therefore they shall not profit this people at all,’ says the Lord.” (Jeremiah 23:31-32)

Jeremiah was clear in --

II. Identifying the Dangers of False Teaching.

What we see in our text is an example of the brazen boldness of the false prophet. Hananiah was very bold in standing up right in the middle of the temple when the congregation was assembled, and proclaim a message he only claimed came from God, when he knew it hadn't come from God. He was **bold** to proclaim that message because he knew it was the message the **king wanted to hear** so the king would be pleased with him. It was also a message that would be well received by the people of Judah who were assembled at the temple. It would make everyone feel good. It was a populist message!

So one of the real dangers of the false teacher is that their message is designed and styled to be appealing to the audience. That remains as true today as it was in the days of Jeremiah. People by nature will be drawn to the lie because it is appealing to human nature, to our sinful human nature. So Paul wrote to Timothy:

“Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.³ For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears,

they will heap up for themselves teachers; ⁴ and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.

(2 Timothy 4:2-4)

That leads us to the danger found in that message. It isn't harmless to make people feel good about themselves as they are. Earlier in Jeremiah's ministry the Lord said:

“They have healed the hurt of the daughter of My people slightly, Saying, ‘Peace, peace!’ When there is no peace.” (Jeremiah 8:11).

Jeremiah's task was to call the people to repentance, even though the Lord had already told Jeremiah that most of the people would reject that message of repentance. A contributing factor to that rejection was the competing message of peace **without** repentance. False prophets like Hananiah contradicted Jeremiah and other faithful prophets by telling the people that God would not bring judgment upon them, and that all would be fine very soon. Babylon would set their already exiled fellow countrymen free, and Judah would thrive again as a nation. They were declaring peace with God when there was no peace, and too many people fell for that line, and so were doomed to destruction.

Many preachers today are busy comforting sinners in their sin, rather than leading them out of sin into repentance. They are like the false prophets of old declaring peace when there is no peace. They are reassuring the impenitent that God will not condemn them, and so they lead them along on the path to destruction. While it is seen as sweet and loving and wonderful by the world, it is spiritual violence, even murder.

It isn't only the impenitent sinners that are harmed by this. Other simple Christians who faithfully attend worship are being deceived. I'm not saying that they are simple minded and can't distinguish the truth for themselves. I'm saying that they trust their called shepherds who are to present them with the truth of God. So they follow where their shepherds lead, believing that they would not lead them astray. Paul's familiar words of warning from the last chapter of Romans states this well.

“Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid

them. ¹⁸ *For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple.”* (Romans 16:17-18)

For the life of me I cannot understand why so many people think, “That warning doesn’t apply to me.” Why do people think “I won’t be fooled, I won’t be taken in by their smooth words and their flattery.” Smooth words and flattery can take in anybody, everybody. It’s the devil’s way. It has been from the beginning when Adam and Eve fell into sin in the Garden of Eden. Oh yeah, I forgot; none of us would have fallen into sin if we would have been in Adam and Eve’s place. We aren’t that gullible, are we? The smooth words of false teachers are dangerous to your faith. They deceive the hearts of believers.

True evangelical preaching is --

III. Preaching Repentance for Peace through Christ.

There are prophets who preach Peace when there is no peace, and peace does not come. Jeremiah challenged Hananiah:

Jeremiah 28:9 “As for the prophet who prophesies of peace, when the word of the prophet comes to pass, the prophet will be known *as one whom the LORD has truly sent.*”

The peace of which Hananiah prophesied would not come. Instead of peace there was judgment and pestilence as Jerusalem was besieged and finally the walls were breached, and when Zedekiah tried to escape with his family and other royalty, they were caught and brought before Nebuchadnezzar, and they were killed. And Zedekiah’s sons were killed before him and then Zedekiah’s eyes were put out so that their death was the last thing he would ever see. **NO peace.** “***There is no peace,’ says the LORD, ‘for the wicked.***” (Isaiah 48:22).

Oh but what of the Prophet who was to come, Jesus our Lord? Remember the words of our gospel lesson when Jesus is looking at the disciple’s life in this world.

Matthew 10:34-36 “Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. ³⁵ For I have come

to ‘set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law’; ³⁶and ‘a man’s enemies *will be* those of his *own* household.’

Evangelical preaching doesn’t always bring with it warm and fuzzy peace in this life. However, it does bring the greater peace of sins forgiven. Jesus assured Nicodemus:

“For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. 18 “He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. 19 And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.” (John 3:17-19)

Jesus preached repentance. Jesus preached that sinners should go and sin no more. Jesus called sinners to repentance; that they should have faith in Him and in His righteousness, and that then they would have peace with God. It is as John wrote in his first epistle; *“the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin,”* (1 John 1:7)

and again:

“These things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. ²And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.” (1 John 2:1-2)

Jesus is the true prophet who brought peace into the world. Jesus and only Jesus can bring us peace with God. Jesus is the one who saves us from sin and death and condemnation. Evangelical preaching directs us away from sin, away from self, and to Jesus who is our righteousness, and life, and peace.

“Jesus! – the name that charms our fears,
That bids our sorrows cease;
‘Tis music to the sinner’s ears,
‘Tis life and health and peace.

“He breaks the power of canceled sin,
He sets the prisoner free;
His blood can make the foulest clean;
His blood avails for me.

“Look unto Him, ye nations, own
Your God, ye fallen race.
Look and be saved by grace alone,
Be justified by grace.”

(The Lutheran Hymnal 360:3-5)

AMEN.

“Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” Amen. (Romans15:13)