

I.N.I.

Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost
Sept. 3, 2017
Jeremiah 11:18-20

In Christ Jesus, who knows our needs and well provides for us, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

What a shock it must have been! What a shock it must have been for Jeremiah to learn that his own townspeople, many of them priests, were plotting to kill him. WHY? Had Jeremiah done something terrible to them? Had he been guilty of treason against the king? Had he been unfaithful to the priesthood? None of these things was he guilty of. He was only guilty of faithfully proclaiming God's Word. What Jeremiah proclaimed angered, shamed and embarrassed the people and the priests of his hometown.

As we heard last Sunday Jeremiah preached a message of severe warning to faithless Judah. They had abandoned the Lord's Words, or as Jeremiah put it, they had left the **FOUNTAINS OF LIVING WATERS AND DUG FOR THEMSELVES WELLS THAT COULD HOLD NO WATER**. Instead of listening to God's Word that brings life and salvation, they listened to their own words which brought nothing but death and destruction. The LORD through Jeremiah had pleaded with the people to turn from their sins and return to Him, but they would not. So the LORD directed Jeremiah to proclaim a judgment upon the people, a judgment so severe and terrifying that Jeremiah even felt real physical pain when he proclaimed it. We read in Jeremiah 4 **O MY SOUL, MY SOUL! I AM PAINED IN MY VERY HEART! MY HEART MAKES A NOISE IN ME; I CANNOT HOLD MY PEACE, BECAUSE YOU HAVE HEARD, O MY SOUL, THE SOUND OF THE TRUMPET, THE ALARM OF WAR. DESTRUCTION UPON DESTRUCTION IS CRIED, FOR THE WHOLE LAND IS PLUNDERED.**

But the people did not listen. They were led to believe by the false priests that the mere presence of the temple in Jerusalem would save them. Far from any real faith or trust, they were left with only this empty superstition. It is like someone today believing that just because they are a member of a church they are saved from God's wrath and will go to heaven. They trust in their membership, not in the Lord Jesus Christ. How could God destroy Jerusalem with His own temple, His own house of worship in it? They just couldn't believe it would happen. So they continued in their godless ways, rejecting the LORD. This also made Jeremiah sick. Since they had broken their covenant with the LORD and refused to listen to His Words of warning, there was no hope. Jeremiah was even ordered by God not to pray for the people.

You can see why the people hated Jeremiah. His message enraged these impenitent false priests who were proclaiming an entirely different message of peace and safety. They looked upon Jeremiah as the problem, not themselves. In anger these people and priests plotted to do away with both, the messenger and the message.

It seems Jeremiah at first was oblivious to their hatred toward him. Obediently he simply proclaimed what God had told him. With all of his heart he hoped that the people of Judah would listen and repent. Little did he understand the depth of their impenitence, that it drove them to even plot murder. However, their real anger was not against Jeremiah, but against the LORD God, for it was God's message that Jeremiah proclaimed. The fault was not Jeremiah's but their own, their sinfulness, their refusal to change their ways, that was the reason for such harsh preaching of God's Law. The preaching of Judgment was intended to lead them to repent.

By revealing the plot to Jeremiah, the LORD was again calling the people to repentance. He was clearly showing to them that He knows all things. He knew that they were secretly plotting to kill His prophet. Nothing can be hidden from the eyes of the all seeing God. Did they really think that they could secretly plot and then secretly carry out such a plan against one of God's prophets? The LORD showed them that He knew all of this for two reasons.

- 1) To try to bring the people to acknowledge their sin and repent of it.
- 2) To comfort Jeremiah.

We heard last Sunday that God said this to Jeremiah when he was reluctant to take up the calling as a prophet of God because of his youth: **"DO NOT SAY, 'I AM A YOUTH,' FOR YOU**

SHALL GO TO ALL WHOM I SEND YOU, AND WHATEVER I COMMAND YOU, YOU SHALL SPEAK. DO NOT BE AFRAID OF THEIR FACES, FOR I AM WITH YOU TO DELIVER YOU,” SAYS THE LORD. Jeremiah did confidently trust in his LORD and boldly proclaimed what God commanded him.

And yet Jeremiah was shocked by this revelation. How naive he had been. He uses a very striking picture to describe his simplicity of heart: **BUT I WAS LIKE A DOCILE LAMB BROUGHT TO THE SLAUGHTER...** The word for “docile” means a pampered and favored domestic pet, secure among those it trusted. Jeremiah unsuspectingly trusted his fellow citizens and would have been led meekly, obediently to the slaughter without even knowing of their evil plan till it was too late. Immediately we think of the words of Isaiah 53:7: **HE WAS LED LIKE A LAMB TO THE SLAUGHTER.** In this way Jeremiah was a type of Christ in heart and will. Although Christ full well knew what was going to happen to Him yet He allowed it and endured it all.

Jeremiah sums up the intent of his enemies in their plot against him. They said, **LET US DESTROY THE TREE WITH ITS FRUIT, AND LET US CUT HIM OFF FROM THE LAND OF THE LIVING, THAT HIS NAME MAY BE REMEMBERED NO MORE.** Kill the tree and there will be no more fruit. Kill Jeremiah and there will be no more of his preaching and proclaiming all of that bad news of judgment and destruction. When he is dead, his voice will be silent. Nobody will ever remember that he even existed.

How foolish! It was God’s message, not Jeremiah’s. It cannot be stopped or silenced!

Is it not a beautiful display of God’s power that today we know none of these men who plotted Jeremiah’s death? None of their names are known or recorded, yet the one whom they wanted to obliterate from the face of the earth with no remembrance of him, has been remembered and is well known. His words have been recorded and read for over 2,500 years by countless millions of Christians from generation to generation and will continue to be known until the end of time on into eternity.

The word of the Lord endures forever. The words, plots and schemes of men all come to naught. And even if the world does forget the child of God, and his name is remembered no more; the Lord God knows him and remembers him.

In the last verse of our text we see that Jeremiah put the whole situation into the hands of the Lord. He said, **BUT, O LORD OF HOSTS, YOU WHO JUDGE RIGHTEOUSLY, TESTING THE MIND AND THE HEART, LET ME SEE YOUR VENGEANCE ON THEM, FOR TO YOU I HAVE REVEALED MY CAUSE.** No doubt Jeremiah knew the words of Psalm 2 **WHY DO THE HEATHEN RAGE, AND THE PEOPLE PLOT A VAIN THING?...HE WHO SITS IN THE HEAVENS SHALL LAUGH, THE LORD SHALL HOLD THEM IN DERISION...** and also Ps. 27 where David wrote **THE LORD IS MY LIGHT AND MY SALVATION; WHOM SHALL I FEAR? THE LORD IS THE STRENGTH OF MY LIFE; OF WHOM SHALL I BE AFRAID? WHEN THE WICKED CAME AGAINST ME TO EAT UP MY FLESH, MY ENEMIES AND FOES THEY STUMBLERED AND FELL. THOUGH AN ARMY SHOULD ENCAMP AGAINST ME, MY HEART SHALL NOT FEAR; THOUGH WAR SHOULD RISE AGAINST ME, IN THIS I WILL BE CONFIDENT.**

Jeremiah’s appeal is to the Lord, who judges righteously. God acts according to reality, not appearance. The Lord is not neutral, but defends His children. He defends those who are unable to defend themselves and who have committed their cause to Him. Jeremiah knew that the Lord could see into his heart and mind. And what did the Lord God see? He saw in Jeremiah’s heart a love for Him and a desire to proclaim His Word simply, directly and truthfully. The Lord knows the hearts of His children and He also knows the evil motives and intents of His enemies for **everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.**

Jeremiah is confident the Lord will act in his defense. He prayed that he might see the Lord’s action with his own eyes. This does not mean that Jeremiah had hatred for his enemies. He is not crying out for personal revenge, which would also be sinful on his part, but his desire is for the Lord’s glory and for the Lord’s truth. At stake is the Word of God and he knows God’s faithfulness to His own name will bring about justice for all to see. With that the prophet patiently waits on the Lord to solve the situation, to take care of the problem. What a tremendous lesson to learn early in one’s ministry, and early in one’s life.

There is a powerful comfort in our text for the believing child of God, the one who has committed his cause to the Lord. It is also a powerful admonition to all of us to proclaim the truth of the Word at all times; to be sincere in our dealings with each other. We need to realize that we may be able to hide a sinful heart or sinful desires and even sinful actions from others; from our parents, spouse, pastor, members or friends, but the Lord knows the thoughts and the intents of the heart, and therefore this text also underscores the necessity of God's forgiving grace and powerful protection and help for His own.

This morning we are applying our text to this thought:

OUR COMFORT IN TIMES OF CRISIS IS FOUND IN THE LORD.

From our text we can clearly see that

- 1) THE LORD UNDERSTANDS WHAT IS HAPPENING.**
- 2) THE LORD IS ON OUR SIDE.**

Do you think that the Lord knew what was happening with hurricane Harvey this past week? Do you think He knew and directed where this powerful hurricane would go and how much rain would fall? Over 50 inches in some places! Do you think God knows what is going on in North Korea, or Afghanistan, Iraq, or right here in Middleton? Do you think that God is still in control even in the worst of times? Of course He is! In the midst of a crisis or disaster, we may be in shock, in total confusion, unable to know what to do and where to turn. Very often numbness settles in. Depression may soon follow and an inability to get anything done, or even desire to get anything done comes about. Anger, resentment, frustration, self-pity, sometimes hopelessness and the feeling that all is lost can follow a crisis.

We need to remember that the Lord knows what is happening. Jeremiah could easily have despaired, knowing that his fellow townspeople hated him and wanted to, in fact were plotting to kill him. He could have quickly sunk into self-pity and maybe even lash out at God for allowing this to take place, after he had been so faithful to the Lord. All of these are very real human, sinful reactions to crisis and disasters.

Jeremiah did experience some of these reactions. Shock for example. But he didn't do any of these other sinful things. He turned to the One who had promised him: **FOR I AM WITH YOU, TO DELIVER YOU!** Yes, Jeremiah was shocked at the news. He was sobered into realizing just what kind of fight he was engaged in. And so should we be. Our fight, our warfare in life is for eternal life. The Lord has revealed to each of us that there is somebody who is also plotting against us, plotting to kill you and me spiritually, to take away from us our eternal life and heavenly inheritance. Who is that? The old evil foe!

The Apostle Paul wrote these applicable words: **FOR OUR STRUGGLE IS NOT AGAINST FLESH AND BLOOD, BUT AGAINST...THE POWERS OF THIS DARK WORLD AND AGAINST THE SPIRITUAL FORCES OF EVIL IN THE HEAVENLY REALMS.**

Satan's one desire is that we, like the people of Judah, live in the deception of saying "the Lord will not destroy me **I BELONG TO A CHURCH, I GO TO CHURCH!** I won't go to hell for **I AM A GOOD PERSON!**" Satan will get us to try to use Christ and Christianity like a good luck charm or some superstitious belief. As long as we go through the motions, say the right words, do the right things all will be fine. He will try to lead us to believe that God can only see us on Sunday morning when we appear before Him in His house: that's the only time He needs to be catered to, acknowledged, obeyed and worshipped: the rest of the week we can think, say, and do what we please; He won't know.

But God sees the heart everyday. The preaching of the Law is needed to lead us to realize our sins, not in abstract, but in reality and the Gospel is needed to lead us to realize that God is on our side. He has conquered all of our enemies, because He loves us. He sent His Son into this world as our Savior, to take our place. Jesus lived the life we could not live and then He died the death we deserved to die. He rose from the dead and in so doing He destroyed death's power over us. Sin has been removed, Satan has been chained and is powerless and death has been conquered by the Living One. The Lord has **RESCUED US FROM EVERY EVIL ATTACK AND WILL BRING US SAFELY INTO HIS HEAVENLY KINGDOM.**

In times of crisis we need to remember this lesson of Jeremiah. Turn to the Lord and His Word for that will sustain you and me through all of the difficult days and years ahead.

THE LORD UNDERSTANDS WHAT IS HAPPENING.
THE LORD IS ON OUR SIDE.
Praise God!

Amen.