

The Eighth Sunday after Trinity
2 August, Anno Domini 2020
Jeremiah 21:16-29
Pr. Kurt Ulmer

In the Name of the Father, and of the +Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

“Do not listen...” Don’t take even a sip of their poison. Utterly reject and turn your back on all false prophets who fill you with false hope, who nod and wink at your sins as though they are nothing, who promise peace anywhere but in the Blood of Jesus Christ. Do not listen to them. This isn’t God giving “Dear Abby”-style advice. It is a strict command to you and every Christian for the sake of your eternal salvation. Avoid those who claim to speak for God but speak a different word than what is found in the Biblical preaching of the prophets and the apostles. There are no new revelations beyond the Scriptures. The teaching of Christ’s Church is not developing or evolving. It has and always will be one Lord, one faith, one Baptism, one God and Father over all.

God does not speak out of both sides of His mouth saying one thing today to this person and another tomorrow to another person and the complete opposite to yet another the next day. Unlike everything else in this chaotic world, the pure Word of God is the same yesterday, today, and always and it alone is light and life and truth. Neither the judgment of the Law nor the saving Gospel change based on time or place or person. The Word of God shines a spotlight on the evil that dwells in your heart of flesh and still seeks to rule over you. It binds up those crushed by the hammer of the Law with the balm of Christ’s atoning death. It is not true or faithful preaching unless the Law is preached with all its devastating wrath and the Gospel not preached with every last drop of comfort. False teaching leads down the broad path to hell. Faithful preaching raises sinners out of hell and into eternal life.

In the prophet Jeremiah’s day, Israel had grown weary of God’s Word. They had come to hate it. It was boring. It had the audacity to tell them that they were wrong. It told them that their idolatry was sinful. It told them that their lust for favor and pleasure in this world was about to destroy them. And so, as they had done before, rather than repenting and returning to the God who had brought them up out of the slavery and death of Egypt, they turned on the true Word and the prophets who dared preach it. They threw Jeremiah in a pit. Instead they found pastors and churches who would tell them that there was peace and no need to fear. “You are Israel! You have circumcision! You have the temple! No evil will

befall you. God is pleased with your idolatry because it's more important that you believe something than anything in particular. God is quite all right with your failure to observe the Sabbath Day and hear His saving Word because you certainly have more important things going on to tend to. Besides, we have powerful political allies. There is no one who can conquer us. Peace! Peace!"

But there was no peace. It was all a lie. And the very real wrath of God against Israel's unbelief came down with a mighty blow, leveling the temple and carting them off to far away Babylon - away from their home, away from the temple, away from the land of promise. There by the river they sat down and wept bitter tears. There was no peace. God's people had turned away from His Word, turned away from the true faith and sought a more pleasing and reasonable word and paid the price. They put their trust in pagan idols and pagan nations for protection and safety. They did not take seriously God's hatred of sin. They scoffed at the commandments imaging "God doesn't see. He doesn't care." They thought they could hide. They despised the protection and deliverance of the true God and sought salvation on their own terms. They gladly listened to the smooth talk of the wolves because the wolves looked like sheep and made the sheep feel good. The wolves seemed so holy. They were so well-liked. They said "This is the Word of the Lord". But it wasn't, no matter how badly they wanted it to be. Jeremiah warned them but they wouldn't listen.

Children of God, the days are growing darker. The attack on truth is growing more fierce. God's enemies are looking for any means by which to draw our faith and the faith of our children away from God our Heavenly Father. They are using fear and intimidation. They are seeking to control the language that is used. They are trying to use the power of the state to silence the church's calls to repentance. In some places they are even trying to dictate the conduct of the church's worship by denying God's people the ability to sing God's praises and deciding how the Lord's Supper can and cannot be distributed. They are trying to turn us against one another. They are encouraging us to think the worst about our neighbor and their intentions. They are trying to draw our peace out of pierced and resurrected hands of Christ and place it into the hands of doctors and politicians. "Peace if you elect me!" "Peace if you don't get sick!" "Peace if your liberties are maintained!" "Peace if you trust science and the experts!"

They do not have peace to offer you, only empty promises. They are false prophets just as much as those who deny the divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ, who reject baptismal regeneration, who deny the bodily presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper, or who teach you to pray to saints and trust in your own good works. Do

not listen to any of them. There is no true peace in the mouths who draw your attention away from Jesus. They want you to be overwhelmed like Peter on the sea of Galilee who feared the wind and the waves more than he trusted in Christ and so began to drown. The peace of a clean conscience, the peace that stands firm in the threat of sickness and death, is the peace which Christ the Savior purchased by His cross and passion. This peace is a free gift from God the Father distributed to all who would hear and receive it in faith. This peace is the divine promise of life and resurrection, of the forgiveness of all your sins, of the loosing of the chains of death. This peace is the peace that passes all human understanding as it is received under the holy Body and precious Blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Your life is hidden safely with God in Christ who sits at the right hand of the Father, who will keep you in safety by proclaiming the truth into your ears and mouths as you gather in His holy house.

Listen to Jesus. He is the true prophet, the true pastor who speaks the Father's Word. He stands in your midst this day to still your fears and your anxious hearts by taking away your sin and death. Do not listen to those who would have you doubt His promises. Do not let the world or your flesh keep you from hearing His pure Word of life and salvation. Do not be like faithless Israel who grew weary with and despised God's Word and taught their children to do the same. The forgiveness which Jesus poured over you in the waters of Holy Baptism is an impregnable fortress in which you may take shelter from the chaos and the despair and the hopelessness and the bitterness that seek to overwhelm you. Christ proclaims to you His victory and your salvation so that you would not be swept away by false belief, despair, and other great shame and vice. His Word is life and hope in these gray and latter days. His promises to you will not change. False teachers cannot offer you any of that. False teachers hate the word of Christ because it is so foolish and does not earn them money or power or the friendship of the world.

No man can live without this pure preaching because only pure preaching points you to Christ. All other preaching seeps in and undermines true faith in Christ to your eternal destruction. Avoid it at all costs. Guard yourself and your children and your brothers and sisters in Christ from these false teachers and their false teaching because they can and will only do harm. Indeed, it is our obligation as Christians to join ourselves only to those who rightly proclaim the whole counsel of God and administer the gifts of salvation in full accordance with Christ's institution. To knowingly accept less than the full truth, is to despise God and His Word and encourage others to do the same. We need the truth. The truth saves. True faith cannot exist in the absence of the true Word of God because such faith

will be in the wrong things. You need to hear the Word of God daily because without it you will be led astray. Your children need to hear the Word of God daily because without it their faith will die. Do not listen to the false prophets who stroke your egos or use fear to bring you under their dominion. Listen to Jesus. Listen to Jesus who says "It is finished. Your sins are forgiven." Listen to Jesus who says "Do not be afraid. I have overcome the world." Listen to Jesus who says "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die." Listen to Jesus who says "Baptism now saves you." Listen to Jesus who says "Take, eat and drink; this is my Body and Blood for you for the forgiveness of sins." Listen to Jesus who says, as our dear brother Harry quoted faithfully time and again "For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them." Put your faith and hope and trust in Jesus and listen only to Him that you may be saved.

In the Name of +Jesus.