

INI-SDG

In the Name of Jesus – To God Alone the Glory

3.29.2009 Lent 5 – St. Stephen Lutheran (West Bay) Mountain View, CA – Pastor N. Radichel

Good morning once again fellow sinners... reconciled to God through Christ. This morning's meditation means a lot to me personally, NOT because the Word of God we are looking at is more important than any other Sunday... but because of the one who was speaking it. Jeremiah, as we discussed in Sunday morning Bible classes, like so many others gave an excuse when the LORD called him to hear His Word and serve the LORD as a young man. Listen, to this conversation once again from the first chapter of Jeremiah...

4 The word of the LORD came to me, saying, 5 "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."

6 "Ah, Sovereign LORD," I said, "I do not know how to speak; I am only a child."

7 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. 8 Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you and will rescue you," declares the LORD.

9 Then the LORD reached out his hand and touched my mouth and said to me, "Now, I have put my words in your mouth. 10 See, today I appoint you over nations and kingdoms to uproot and tear down, to destroy and overthrow, to build and to plant."

What does God's Word do? According to the verses just read the Word of the LORD that was put into Jeremiah's mouth was of LAW: **to uproot and tear down, to destroy and overthrow**, and of GOSPEL: **to build and to plant**. Those of you who were able to take part in the blessings found in the study of the book of Jeremiah would recall how Jeremiah's message from the LORD to the people was one of horrible destruction. Jeremiah records the final prophecies to Judah, warning of oncoming destruction if the nation did not repent.

Who wants to confront and tell somebody what they are doing...or not doing, is wrong? Jeremiah had a difficult message to deliver. He loved his fellow people from Judah, but he loved God much more. As painful as it was for Jeremiah to deliver a consistent message of judgment to his own people, Jeremiah was obedient to what God told him to do and say. As we read through the Word of God spoken through Jeremiah, note the repeated statement he uses again and again.

NIV Jeremiah 31:31 "The time is coming," declares the LORD, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. 32 It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them," declares the LORD.

33 "This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time," declares the LORD. "I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. 34 No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest," declares the LORD.

"For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more."

These are the very Words of God ...**DECLARES THE LORD**. Therefore we would do well to pray this morning, "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of our hearts be acceptable in Your sight oh Lord, our Strength and our Redeemer." Amen.

One of the concerns most churches have is with their young people. How can we impress upon our young people the importance of what God's Word says and means in their lives? I have some younger friends from Immanuel who unfortunately are discontent with our CLC churches, "*I have been going to church every week and it has been ok. I still feel I need more. I hate to say it but church does not inspire my soul enough!*"

I am concerned that there are many younger people not feeling that they get enough out of church. Is it just the ME generation? Is it just young people? I believe age has nothing to do with it. You and I live in the entertainment capital of the world, but should we expect that from our worship as well? If we are up late the night before should we expect that church should keep us awake? God does NOT reveal His Word to ENTERTAIN...but to SAVE and to GUIDE. IF God's Word is being taught purely, could the fault come from within the worshipper? When a parent shows love to a child by correction or expresses love through words, does the child always care or even listen?

You are a horrible sinner that deserves eternal death in hell. You cannot deny that. You and I sin everyday in our thoughts, words, and actions. We don't deserve to be blessed with tomorrow... or today for that matter. What we get from this church are these truths and facts. The people in Jeremiah's day got these truths and facts as well while God called them through His Word to repentance and sorrow over their spiritual adultery with God. A sinner, who knows and understands his or her unfaithfulness to God, desperately goes to the Word to read and hear the grace and peace of forgiveness in Christ. None of us would fast from eating for a day or even a week because we were too busy checking email...or would we? How far would you go to get food if you were starving? How far would you go for a healthy meal that wasn't contaminated? Neither would we want to fast from God's Word which supplies the only nutrition for our souls. In fact, God calls that fasting from His Word sin... as we are told in His commandments. That's not inspiring. That's the truth.

Excuses... and the desires for a "fun" church come from our flesh and the devil. The rest of the world is leaning towards this "social" gospel over the coffee cup. That is NOT what you need. You need to hear what you deserve... eternal punishment in hell. And you need to hear what Christ did to free you from that place of punishment you and I will indeed go without Him. Your church teaches those truths. And THAT is enough. Remember Psalm 23. "The LORD is my shepherd..." that is enough. One might think, "But that is so repetitive!" Our Heavenly Father says the same thing about our sins.

You don't need a church that incorporates text messaging into the worship service. You don't need a church that gives you a discount at a local coffee shop when you stop by to worship with them. These things are going on today. You need a church that emphasizes the teaching of the LAW and the GOSPEL of God's Word, which makes THAT it's top priority. The LORD spoke to Jeremiah as recorded in chapter 23:33 saying, "***The prophet who has a dream, let him tell a dream; And he who has My word, let him speak My word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat?***" declares the LORD. The little extra things we do here at St. Stephen from time to time mean nothing compared to what the Lord God has called each of us to do with His Word. What did Paul write to Timothy the young pastor? ***All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work. (2 Timothy 3:16,17)***

Today and next Sunday Lord-willing we will be going through in Bible class your church's "Statement of Faith and Purpose." As a member of this church I think it is appropriate that we understand the truth we ascribe to. God's Word... is the source of ALL truth. Therefore in view of His truth, we state and I quote:

We reject as ungodly and destructive every effort by which some would change, add to, or set aside a single inspired word of the Bible. God's Word is clear and sufficient in all matters of faith and life. We deplore the widespread unfaithfulness – found even in some professing Christian churches – that reduces the Bible to a human document containing errors and myths.

Why do we say such words? Because Jesus says, ***Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away. Luke 21:33*** Psalm 119 says, ***Your word is a lamp to my feet And a light to my path. I have sworn and confirmed that I will keep Your righteous judgments. (105,106)*** For as verse 31 says in our text... "**The time is coming,**" declares the LORD. Judgment Day could yet be today. So the words we speak are not harsh, but time critical words that come from a love for God's Word ABOVE all things, and ABOVE the so called "NEEDS" that have the tendency to compromise God's truth. When Jesus was tempted by the devil to turn away from God's Word Jesus *said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'*" (Matthew 4:4)

The prophet Jeremiah had a difficult message to deliver too. But it is the same message of repentance and forgiveness. Jeremiah loved Judah, but he loved God much more. As painful as it was for Jeremiah to deliver a CONSISTENT message of judgment to his own people, Jeremiah was OBEDIENT to what God told him to do and say. Jeremiah hoped and prayed for mercy from God for Judah, but also trusted that God was good, just, and righteous. We too ought to obey God, even when it is difficult. God's will is to help us recognize that His Word is more important than our own desires, His truth more important than our flesh. Through God's Word we trust that in His infinite wisdom and perfect plan He will bring about the very best for His children just as He promises.

Today is the 5th Sunday in Lent, otherwise known in the Latin as JUDICA Sunday. It is indeed a Sunday of Judgment, because we are just one week away from celebrating Holy week in which all fingers point to you and me for the reason why our Savior had to go to the cross! Selfishness, disobedience, and idolatry are the REASON that the Word of the LORD came to Jeremiah and God's other prophets who told of coming judgment, but also of the new covenant promised in Christ. Open your bulletin again and look there to verse 31 and following, **"The time is coming," declares the LORD, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. 32 It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them," declares the LORD. 33 "This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time," declares the LORD. "I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. 34 No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest," declares the LORD. "For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more."**

The Old Testament reveals how God dealt with the Hebrew nation on the basis of the covenant given at Mt. Sinai (the 10 Commandments) which we also have broken again and again. But in these verses today we see that the Mosaic covenant would be surpassed by another covenant, the covenant from God in which we now enjoy much more than just on Sundays...the covenant in the Gospel of Christ. It was through the blood sacrifice that was required by God in the old covenant that our Lord Jesus Christ carried out and fulfilled once and for all in His perfect life and innocent death on the cross as the Lamb of God. It is through this sacrificial act of the coming Messiah, Jesus Christ, that Jeremiah often facing death told his own people... **"For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more."...DECLARES THE LORD.** His Word...IS enough.

This peace of God, that passes all understanding will guard and keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.