Lent 2 Jeremiah 26:8-15
March 13, 2022 368-541-393/381-355

What Will YOU Do with God's Word?
I. When YOU don't like what it says?
II. When sharing it will cause YOU trouble?

Dear Christian friends,

Did you catch the SHARP CONTRASTS in today's readings? In the **gospel** reading there's the **Jews'** stubborn rejection of Jesus. CONTRAST that with **Jesus'** heartbreaking love and lament over Jerusalem. In the **epistle** reading Paul brought up the SAD REALITY that ***"many lives as enemies of the cross of Christ."*** CONTRAST that with Paul and the Philippian Christians ***"eagerly waiting for (our) Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ - standing firm in the Lord."***

Now here's Jeremiah BOLDLY preaching God's Word – yet look at the opposition he ran into – and FROM WHOM! ***"The priests, the prophets and all the people"*** – God's chosen people! Top that off with WHERE this happened – right in the temple! What a CONTRAST!

Since there's such a **sharp contrast** between those who LOVE and those who HATE God's Word we today ask the question – WHAT WILL **YOU** DO WITH GOD'S WORD? What **will you do** 1)when YOU don't like what God's Word says and 2)when sharing God's Word causes YOU trouble?

I. When YOU don't like what it says?

It's easy to see these verses **applying** TO OTHER people. Just think of people who get ALL UPSET about something the pastor said that **they didn't like**. Or they're **all upset** about a practice that the church has. The **pastor** may be faithfully teaching **God's Word** – the **church** may be faithfully doing what **God's Word** says – but THEY DON'T LIKE it. Their reaction **may not be** AS EXTREME as here – they're not calling for the pastor to **be killed** – for the church to **be burned down**. But it's clear they're NOT HAPPY. They may be upset enough to GO JOIN a **different church** or stop coming to church. That happens!

But what ABOUT YOU – **me**? What do you do when YOU don't like what **God's Word** says? We may be Christians – but **each one** of us also has a sinful nature – and that sinful nature doesn't like ANYTHING **God says**!

Jeremiah was not preaching to UNGODLY HEATHEN in some **far-off** country. **Right before** this Jeremiah had received this command. ***"Stand in the courtyard of the LORD's house, and speak to people …who have come to worship at the House of the LORD. Tell them everything I have commanded you to tell them. Do not hold back a single word. Maybe they will listen, and everyone will turn from his evil way. Then I will relent and not bring about the disaster that I was planning because of the evil things they have done. You are also to say this to him. This is what the LORD says. If you will 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 (but you have not listened), then I will make this house like Shiloh, and I will make the name of this city a curse word for all the nations of the earth."*** Jeremiah preached that message in GOD'S HOUSE to GOD'S PEOPLE who had come to worship! These were "church-going" people!

Here we are this morning in OUR **house** of God. We have come to worship God and hear His Word. Does THIS MESSAGE of ***"reform your ways"*** – OR ELSE! – does that message also apply to you and me? Thank God we're **Christians** – but we're NOT PERFECT!

What do YOU DO **with God's Word** when YOU don't like something it says? We'll accept the truth that we're **sinners**. But when GOD'S Word gets personal and CONDEMNS ME for MY PET sins –

then what? When **God's** law bluntly and clearly, "YOU stop talking like that to your parents! YOU show respect to your **teachers** – your **government**!" When **God's** law bluntly and **clearly** says, "YOU stop drinking so much – **stop** treating your spouse like that – **stop** gossiping – **stop** watching those movies…" When **God's** law bluntly and **clearly** says, "YOU rearrange **your** priorities RIGHT NOW so that I actually do come first in your life and you have time for church every week…" – PICK the commandment – PICK the sin. What do YOU do when God says TO YOU, "Change your ways or **you're going** to hell!"?

We can argue God's PICKING on us – being unfair. "**My** complaining **isn't as bad** as my neighbor **who's shacked up** with his girlfriend." We can have our excuses **why God** will just have to UNDERSTAND and ACCEPT our sins. "I may not make it to church **every week** but I do come **more than** just at Christmas and Easter and when I come I MAKE SURE I **put in** a big offering." God isn't looking for excuses and He doesn't accept any. ***"Reform your ways and actions NOW!"*** God says.

God had Jeremiah preach such STERN and PERSONAL law to try to GET THROUGH to His **stubborn** and **impenitent** people. They went through the MOTIONS of **worshiping** God but their hearts **weren't in** it. They weren't fooling God – ONLY MAKING God **more and more** angry with them. THEY needed to see that **God** was talking TO THEM about THEIR **sinful ways** and IF THEY didn't repent THEY would fall under God's **just judgment**. Unfortunately they **didn't listen**.

What will YOU do when YOU don't like something **God's Word** says? Take it TO HEART! **Take it** PERSONALLY! When we do then there's NOTHING SWEETER or more amazing than the gospel. Repenting of our sins God also wants us to **take the gospel** PERSONALLY and TO HEART. Seeing MY sin there's nothing better than seeing GOD'S SON born **my** Savior – than seeing Jesus live **for me** the holy and perfect life **I owed** God but never could live. Facing up to the **death** and **hell** I deserved because of **my** sin that makes this Lenten season SO PRECIOUS and **comforting**. Jesus took the blame for all **my** sins – Jesus suffered and died on the cross to pay for all **my** sins. Jesus shed His precious blood – sacrificed His holy life and NOW **I** AM **forgiven**! Trusting in Jesus **I** am now a redeemed child of God. Jesus rose triumphant from the dead and clinging to Him **by faith I** am going straight to heaven when I die. After seeing ALL MY SIN what a joy to ***"fix (MY) eyes on Jesus."*** Or as we'll sing in our last hymn, "Take the world, but GIVE **ME** JESUS!"

Now about those OTHER people – the ones Paul said ***"live as enemies of the cross of Christ"*** – the ones as stubborn as the Jews **Jesus lamented** over – the ones who act just like the people in these verses. **What** will YOU do…

II. When sharing God's Word causes YOU trouble?

This wasn't the first time Jeremiah had **preached this message** in the temple. At God's command Jeremiah **had done so** years earlier when **godly king Josiah** was on the throne. **As** Jeremiah repeated this sermon he could no longer count on the SUPPORT and **protection** of Josiah. Josiah was dead and had been replaced by his **ungodly** and **defiant** son Jehoiakim. One time as God's **Word was read** to him Jehoiakim kept cutting the scroll it was written on and tossing it into a fire. SO MUCH for having any respect for God's Word! **Later** we're told how Jehoiakim had another prophet of the Lord **killed**. It was DANGEROUS for Jeremiah **to do** this. Obedient to God's command to ***"not hold back a single word"*** Jeremiah was ASKING FOR TROUBLE – and trouble he got! ***"When Jeremiah had finished saying everything the LORD had commanded him to say…, then the priests, the prophets, and all the people seized him and said, 'You must die!'"*** What will YOU DO when **God's** Word causes trouble FOR YOU?

Learn from Jeremiah here. ***"The LORD sent me to prophesy against this house and against this city all the things that you have heard."*** We have to remember – we're sharing GOD'S Word – not our own PERSONAL OPINIONS. There's a world of difference between ***"This is what the LORD***

says" and **"this is what I think."** Because this is GOD'S Word we have no right to TAMPER with it **in any way**. God strictly commands in both the OT and NT that we ***"not to add to or subtract from"*** His Word. As individual Christians – as a congregation and a church body – we are to faithfully share ALL of **God's** Word and ONLY **God's** Word.

Will that cause YOU – **us** – trouble? COUNT ON it! Today's readings all make that point. That trouble can happen in the COMMUNITY – within our CHURCH FAMILY – within our **own families** and **friends**. But like Jeremiah then REMEMBER that this is GOD'S Word and GOD TELLS us to share it. ***"Teaching them to obey EVERYTHING I have commanded you."*** Jeremiah didn't BACK DOWN. He understood that **if** the people had a problem WITH HIM they **really had** a problem with God. Jesus tells us that AS WE SHARE **His** Word, ***"He who listens to you, listens to Me, and he who rejects you rejects ME."***

Understand the temptation for Jeremiah here – we face it too. Would Jeremiah have had more success if he had TONED things down a bit? Would he have been more accepted and **popular** if he had not been SO STRICT about **what God said**? Would it have been a lot easier and SAFER for Jeremiah to just keep his mouth shut? The answer is yes – but then Jeremiah would not have been FAITHFUL to God. We are not called to be POPULAR but **faithful**. That doesn't mean we can BE OBNOXIOUS or **arrogant**. We are to always ***"speak the TRUTH IN LOVE."*** But as Christians our BIG CONCERN is not what do **people think** but what does God say.

Learn too from Jeremiah that faithfully sharing God's Word is SHOWING LOVE both to **God** and **the people** we're talking to. We show our love TO GOD **by doing** what God tells us to do. We **show our love** TO OTHERS by warning them about their sin and pointing them to their only Savior. To see someone **living in defiance** of God and say, "That's none of MY BUSINESS" is not showing Christian love. We may be accused of BUTTING IN but Christian love calls on us to **at least** MAKE THE EFFORT – whatever the outcome might be.

What will YOU do when God's Word causes YOU trouble? Yes, **what** will YOU DO with God's Word? Let the sharp contrast in **today's readings** lead you to the ONLY GOD-PLEASING answer. Amen.

NICENE CREED