



St John Lutheran Church

1017 Montana
Libby, MT 59923
(406)293-4024

Jeremiah 11:18-20

The Word of God for Jeremiah and for You

"And the LORD caused me to know and I knew; then you showed me their evil practices. But I was like a gentle lamb being led to the slaughter. And I did not know that it was against me that they devised schemes, saying, 'Let us destroy the tree with the fruit, and cut him off from the land of the living, and his name be remembered no more.' Oh, LORD of Hosts, Who judges justly, and Who examines the heart and the mind, let me see Your vengeance on them, for to You I commit my cause."

The psalmist prays the promise of God, confessing to Him: "Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light to my path" (Psalm 119:105). The first comfort is that the LORD God has not left us in the darkness we deserve... but has given us His Word... that is, "the sacred writings which are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:15-17)."

So...if you are a Christian, you receive comfort that God's Word is a lamp unto your feet and a light for as many hours you are here. If you are not a Christian, listen carefully. God has revealed His Word. It is intended for you and His Word is given to you as well. It is most certainly true that God desires that you also be His own now here in time and be with Him forever in eternal Paradise.

In the Bible there are two basic... pure teachings or doctrines ... the Law and the Gospel. There is the Law that reveals the Almighty's Will for what we are to do and not do ... to say and not say ... to think and not think. Jeremiah is correct when he stated that the Lord God is the One "Who judges justly, and Who examines the heart and the mind." Since we are not able to keep God's Law perfectly as He absolutely demands... the Law shows our old sinful nature its transgressions. The Law accuses and condemns the old Adam in each of us... Christian and non-Christian alike. Even though you are not able to keep His Commandments... God's Law offers no gimmees... makes no exceptions... has no loopholes... and cuts no slack.

The other doctrine is the Gospel... a word that means "Good News." The Good News is that God came into this world in order for you to be forgiven of all your sins. This is the message of salvation that began after Adam's Fall from grace and into sin. This is the message of salvation that will continue to the last day of this world. This is the Good News...the message of the prophets that speaks of God's Grace in a world of hurt.

For example, the Prophet Jeremiah lived in a time and place where the forces of the evil one were all around him. Even though God had delivered His people, bringing the ancestors out of bondage and slavery... the succeeding generations departed from listening to the LORD and listened to the voices of liars and man-made gods. Religious leaders engaged in idolatry ... that is, they permitted and encouraged the worship of other gods. With such permissiveness came the message from them of the tolerances to sacrifice children... to engage in sexual abominations... to do whatever to satisfy the unleashed lusts of the decaying flesh... and/or the godless desires of the fallen soul. Not only did the religious leaders engage in these deadly deeds... they approved those who did such things. Many, many rejected God and His Word and the consequences of doing so remained for the people and the nations and the church of Jeremiah's day.

You probably recognize that the world you live in is certainly no different. Even though God has come into this world to die for the sins of all... bringing peace with God through the forgiveness of all sins... and even though Jesus, the Son of God and the Son of Man, rose again from the dead conquering death and the devil... the generations since have quit listening to the LORD. Instead, with ears itching for something new and with a slaving hunger for forbidden fruit... they listen to the voices of liars and the spirits of the times. Religious leaders engage in idolatry ... that is, attending and officiating and participating in worship services of various gods.

They permit and encourage that which is clearly contrary to the Bible... turning God's Word into the opposite of God's Will....attempting to create God in man's image, according to man's likeness ... male and female they create Him or Her or Them or It. An openly gay man ... a practicing homosexual ... is elected to be a bishop in the Episcopal assembly. Clergy and laity alike voted for this even though God's Word condemns such horrible sin. They openly approve what God clearly condemns! This is all too common in the Christian Church at large today.

"Claiming to be wise, they became morons and they exchanged the glory of the immortal God into images made like man and birds and animals and reptiles. Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves. They exchanged the truth of God into the lie and served the creature rather than the Creator, Who is blessed for ever. Amen. For this reason God gave them over to dishonorable passions. Their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural, and likewise also the men, leaving the natural relations with women, burned in their lust for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving the due penalty in themselves. And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them over to a base mind, to do improper things. They are filled with all unrighteousness - fornication, evil, covetousness, malice, envy, murder, strife, deceit, meanness - harmful gossipers, slanderers, God-haters, spiteful, proud, boasters, schemers, disobedient to parents, foolish, faithless, inhuman, unmerciful - who knowing the righteousness of God, that those who do such things deserve to die, not only do they do them, they also approve those who do them" (Romans 1:22-32).

Or, as the LORD said to Jeremiah, "Behold, I am bringing evil upon them which they cannot escape; though they cry to me, I will not listen to them. Then the cities of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem will go and cry to the gods to whom they burn incense, but they cannot save them in the time of their trouble. For your gods have become as many as your

cities, O Judah; and as many as the streets of Jerusalem are the altars you have set up to shame, altars to burn incense to Baal" (Jeremiah 11:11-13).

In the midst of such corporate sin and national consequences... **the faithful** prays the promise of the LORD God, confessing to Him: **"Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light to my path"** (Psalm 119:105). **While the first** comfort is that the Lord God has revealed His Word... **the other** comfort comes from the fact that **not all** areas around you are given light... **that is**, the lamp and light are only given for a small area about you ... **at that** path where your feet are. **You are not** able to see everything that is happening or will happen. **In dark areas** to one side are the wicked men of this world... **lurking**. **How many** were close to you during this past week? **You don't know**, do you? **It is better for us not to know all things** that go on around us.

In the shadows to the other side of you is Lucifer... **the Prince** of Darkness. **That, dearly Christian**, is a reality. **Though certainly chained...** **this fallen** angel is also certainly nearby, seeking someone to devour ... **someone who** strays from the path enlightened by God's Word and who... **while carelessly** wandering about in darkness... **stumbles into** the camp of the Evil One. **Above you are** all the devils in the world and below you... **just under** the thin skin of this earth's crust, are all those graves. **God, in His** mercy, prevents you from seeing all this. **Mercifully you are** not shown what is up ahead of you, in the shadows beyond your lighted path. **There might be** physical pain... **the casket** of a loved one... **betrayal... amputation... Alzheimer's Disease... loneliness... martyrdom... a flood** of tears, **or guilt** that weighs down. **There are some things** that are best for us not to know, either right now or at all in our lives.

"The secret things belong to the LORD our God; but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the Words of this Doctrine (Torah)" (Deuteronomy 29:29). So, as Jesus said, **"Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Let the day's trouble be sufficient for the day"** (Matthew 6:34).

Will there come a day of terrible, shocking trouble? **Yes and you** will know of it then. **That day came** for Jeremiah. **There was a** revolt against God among the people of Judah and Jerusalem. **They knew that** Jeremiah was the LORD's prophet and these wicked men were out to get him.

Jeremiah writes, "And the LORD caused me to know and I knew; then you showed me their evil practices. But I was like a gentle lamb being led to the slaughter. And I did not know that it was against me that devised schemes, saying, 'Let us destroy the tree with the fruit, and cut him off from the land of the living, and his name be remembered no more.'"

Though this was a struggle and Jeremiah had to endure suffering, insult, hardship, lies and pain of body, soul and spirit... **still he** trusted in God and prayed, **"Oh, Lord of Hosts, Who judges justly, and Who examines the heart and the mind, let me see Your vengeance on them, for to You I commit my cause."**

What's ahead for you? God alone knows. If it is physical pain, fear not... God is not punishing you since Christ took all your eternal pain of punishment upon Himself when He was crucified. If it is betrayal... fear not, Jesus was betrayed and God is faithful to His unchanging promise of gracious love. **If you must stand at the graveside of a loved one.... fear not,** Christ has defeated death. **If an arm or foot or leg is amputated... fear not,** Jesus' Resurrection restores life and limb. **If Alzheimer's Disease** awaits you with the insidious possibility that you may not even know who you are... **fear not,** God has redeemed you. **He has called** you by name, you are His and He knows His own. **If you are lonely.... fear not,** the entire Holy Trinity ... **Father, Son, Holy Spirit** dwells within you.

God will never leave you nor forsake you. **Remember the sure** promise that Jesus is with you always... even to the end of the age. **Even if martyrdom** awaits you... **fear not;** that day you will be with Christ in Paradise. **If the weeping** tears are bitter... **fear not,** Jesus turns such tears to ones of rejoicing. **If overwhelming guilt** consumes you... **fear not** and recall the truth of God's Good News for you: namely... **Christ has** paid the price of all your violations of God's Law and by the grace of God, you are forgiven of all your sins in the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Pentecost 18B, 2006

Rev. Eric M. Christiansen
St. John Lutheran Church
Libby, Montana