

November 11, 2007
The Last Judgment

"Stand Up for the Truth of God's Judgment"

JEREMIAH 26:1-6

Early in the reign of Jehoiakim son of Josiah king of Judah, this word came from the LORD: ² "This is what the LORD says: Stand in the courtyard of the LORD's house and speak to all the people of the towns of Judah who come to worship in the house of the LORD. Tell them everything I command you; do not omit a word. ³ Perhaps they will listen and each will turn from his evil way. Then I will relent and not bring on them the disaster I was planning because of the evil they have done. ⁴ Say to them, 'This is what the LORD says: If you do not listen to me and follow my law, which I have set before you, ⁵ and if you do not listen to the words of my servants the prophets, whom I have sent to you again and again (though you have not listened), ⁶ then I will make this house like Shiloh and this city an object of cursing among all the nations of the earth.'"

*"Nobody loves me, everybody hates me, I'm gonna go eat worms.
Big fat juicy ones, little tiny squirmy ones, I'm gonna go eat worms."*

Very few of you sitting here this morning have ever been so disliked and hated that you felt like eating worms. However, I could easily hear Jeremiah singing such a song. The Lord told him to stand in the temple courts and tell the worshippers the truth about their unfaithfulness to their God and the terrible destruction that was coming to the city of Jerusalem. People hated him.

What if the Lord told you to do something similar? For the next several months go to the thousands of people who go to the Farmer's Market in San Luis Obispo on Thursday evenings. Tell people that judgment day may be coming soon and all people will be judged. Tell them how they have fallen short of God's glory. Tell them they need to believe Jesus has rescued them now before it is too late. Most of the people at the market would avoid getting anywhere near you just as they did the prophet Jeremiah. You would become a "persona non grata."

Do you know the stock market dropped over 500 points this past week? Do you know the price of oil flirted with \$100 a barrel? We heard this on the news, but we did not hear anyone witness to the reality that this could very well be the last week in the world's history. Someone needs to stand up and let people know what is coming. This morning we want to use these words from Jeremiah to help us **"Stand Up for the Truth of God's Judgment."**

The real truth rescues people

The Lord wanted Jeremiah to talk to people so they would change their ways and come back before it was too late. "Stand in the courtyard of the Lord's house and speak to all the people of the towns of Judah who come to worship in the house of the Lord. Tell them everything I command you; do not omit a word. Perhaps they will listen and each will turn

from his evil way.”

Oh, if only we could see this happen more often in the lives of people we know and love. If only we could speak to them, bring them the truth of God’s Word, and see them turn from their evil ways and come back to the Lord.

The Lord told Jeremiah “Tell them everything I command you: do not omit a word.” The Lord told Jeremiah to tell the people, “Has a nation ever changed its gods? (Yet they are not gods at all.) But my people have exchanged their glory for worthless idols.” The people worshipped the Lord in the temple in the morning but it was in the evening they really got excited about their worship. They climbed up into the groves and high places and offered their bread cakes to Ashtoreth whom they affectionately called the Queen of Heaven. They cried out “O Baal hear us. Oh Baal hear us.” Jeremiah, you tell them the truth. Tell them these words: “They have committed two sins: They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, have dug their own cisterns that cannot hold water.”

Jeremiah, tell them the truth about their own sinful hearts. Tell them and don’t omit a word: “Cursed is the man who depends on flesh for his strength and whose heart turns away from the Lord.” Tell them the truth, “The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?”

Jeremiah, you tell them what will happen when I send the Babylonians to overrun the city of Jerusalem. Speak for me Jeremiah, speak for me. Give them the whole truth and nothing but the truth. “I will scatter you like chaff driven by the desert wind. This is your lot, the portion I have decreed for you, because you have forgotten me and trusted in false gods.”

Today we still hear the voice of Jesus telling us to speak the truth for him just as Jeremiah did in his day. “You are my witnesses.” Tell people the truth of their idolatry. Tell them how they make up their own gods but fail to believe in the true God who has revealed himself on the pages of the Bible. What Jeremiah said of the people of his time is still true today. “They have committed two sins: They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, have dug their own cisterns that cannot hold water.” Someone needs to stand up and let the world know how corrupted the human heart is. “The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?”

Speak to the people about the end of the world and judgment day that is coming. Jeremiah talked about the destruction of Jerusalem in his day. Jesus warned about the destruction of Jerusalem at the hands of the Romans, but he also warned about a day of judgment coming for all people that is preceded by clear signs. “There will be signs in the sun, moon and stars. On the earth, nations will be in anguish and perplexity at the tossing of the sea. Men will faint from terror apprehensive of what is coming on the world, for the heavenly bodies will be shaken.” Every disaster, every earthquake, war, famine, bombings and false teaching in the church is like a flashing neon light telling the world Jesus could return at any moment.

We have come to this moment and time in history to be the voice for Jesus who said, “At that time they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. When

these things begin to take place, stand up and life up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near." Jesus wants us to share the truth of his coming and not hide it. He wants people filled with fear and crying out with the Philippian jailor, "What must I do to be saved?" We have the privilege pointing people away from trusting in themselves and their works as their source of salvation. It is our God given privilege to point them to Jesus as John the Baptist once did with these powerful words, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." And if we are at a loss for what to say, we simply repeat the words of Jesus in John 3:16, "For God so loved the world, he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life.:

To appreciate how important it is for us to bear witness to the truth in these last days, permit me to tell the story of how I sat with my father and my mother in the hospital as the doctor explained why my father needed open heart surgery to repair the occluded veins in his heart muscle. The surgeon held a photocopied line drawing of the human heart. He drew in some of the blood vessels that fed the heart muscle and showed how they were blocked and how he would cut away the bad part and put in new veins taken from his legs. The doctor said, if you are lucky, maybe we can get you five more years. That was almost 25 years ago. The doctor had the important job of pointing out to my dad what was wrong with his heart. My dad did not get angry at the doctor for his message, nor did he ridicule and laugh at the doctor when he saw how they were going to help him.

Do you see why your life is so important to other people? Someone needs to speak the truth in love and let people know how far they have fallen of God's glory. Someone needs to let them know that there is only one cure and that is found in Jesus. This job is so tough because people don't want to listen to the truth. Unlike the person who looks to the surgeon for help with an ailing heart, they don't want to see their problem of sin and they don't want Jesus as their cure. God's plan is to use us as the Lord told Jeremiah, "Perhaps they will listen and each will turn from his evil way. Then I will relent and not bring on them the disaster I was planning because of the evil they have done."

The real truth gets us in trouble

Jeremiah sure got into more than his share of trouble for telling people the truth about what was coming in the future. He shared these hard words of the Lord. "If you do 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 (though you have not listened), then I will make this house like Shiloh and this city and object of cursing among all nations of the earth." These words about making the house of the Lord like Shiloh were fighting words that filled them with such hatred and anger. They grabbed Jeremiah and tried to immediately put him to death. Shiloh was the place where the tabernacle was set down for many years before the temple was built. A thriving city built up around the worship. When the temple worship began in Jerusalem Shiloh became nothing, similar to some of the ghost towns in California after all the gold was mined from the hills. They could brush off generic warnings about Babylonians coming, but they could not handle such specific warnings about Jerusalem turning into a ghost town like Shiloh.

Get specific with people and watch how their face changes from a polite smile to anger and hatred. Do you mean to say that hell is a place of everlasting punishment with real flames and fire? Use the words of Jesus. Get specific. Talking about "weeping and gnashing

of teeth" and a "lake of fire." Friendly smiles turn into angry frowns. Point to the problems of the human heart in specific words of Scripture as Jeremiah did and watch people walk away. Talk about Jesus as a great example and you will see the smiles of approval. Talk about blood, sacrifice, a cross, and love that rescues people and you will be challenged for believing Christ is the only way back to God.

Comedian Bob Newhart counseled a man who wanted to be a door to door salesman. He told him to stand behind the door, knock and he would answer. This would give the man a chance to practice his presentation. Bob waited, and waited, and there was no knock. Finally he opened the door and asked the man, "Why didn't you knock?" He said, "I am too afraid." If you have ever been involved in sales you know how hard it can be to knock, or go up to people and engage them in conversation about the product you are selling.

Witnessing to people about the final judgment is even more difficult. You already know what people will think about you. You have the example of Jeremiah. Jesus said that we will be hated for the sake of his name. If only God would have angels take over for us! How grand would that be? Instead he relies on just ordinary garden variety people like us to get the message out to people. Afraid, yes, we are afraid. But then we think of how important the message is and what the Lord told Jeremiah. "Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you and will rescue you." Amen.