



## Morrison Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church

[www.mzluth.org](http://www.mzluth.org)

August 26, 2007

13<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost

Jeremiah 23:23-29

Pastor Randy Ott

First Lesson: Jeremiah 23:23-39

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 139a

Second Lesson: Hebrews 12:1-13

Gospel: Luke 12:49-53

### Speak God's Word Faithfully

Do you know what it's like to see the same thing over and over again that you don't really notice it anymore? Do you know what I mean? It's the familiarity and you just don't notice something. I know when we lived by the Mississippi River and you would come down the rock cut, the first year we lived there I thought it was amazing, but by the twelve year, you didn't really notice it anymore. It's there all the time and you kind of take it for granted. Do you know the kind of thing I am talking about?

There are some truths that are like that when maybe we just miss physical beauty, but sometimes it's a little sadder. There is one Biblical truth that you and I live with day after day after day after day in our lives, and sometimes I think we just don't notice it anymore. We choose to ignore it because we don't really want to acknowledge it maybe. I don't know. That truth that you and I live with day after day and we bump into it and we trip over it, and it's right there in our face day after day but maybe we don't notice it, is that sin makes us stupid.

Sin makes us foolish. Sin leads us to believe things that we obviously know are wrong. Sin makes us do things that we obviously know are wrong. You can see it right away in the Garden with Adam and Eve, right? Who did Adam blame for the fall into sin? He said the woman gave him the fruit, right? But he also said "the woman YOU put here. God, it's your fault." Sin makes us stupid.

As a child, do you remember all those things that we all thought we got away with that our parents didn't notice or maybe our teachers didn't notice? If you are a parent now, have you noticed that you notice some of those things? You just at times choose to say nothing about it. If you have ever taught a class, have you stood in front of the class and said, "You know, there are those things that I can see what they are doing, but right now it just isn't worth my time to stop everything." You kind of figure out that "all those times when I thought I was getting away with everything, I wasn't." I really wish that we had a camera right here on my lapel so you guys could see what you think you are getting away with during church that I see. I know which of you gentlemen have a bruise right about here from your wife with that elbow going. I see what all you little kids think you are getting away with when your parents aren't stopping you. It's obvious. It's right in front of us. But sin makes us think that because lightning didn't come from the sky and drop us dead, we got away with it.

Sin makes us foolish. That is exactly what God was speaking about when he spoke through Jeremiah to these lying prophets who were saying, "I had a dream! I had a

dream! And this is what God had told me,” but when God hadn’t opened his mouth. They thought they were getting away with something. They thought they had pulled one over on God. They thought, maybe even they told themselves the lie often enough, that maybe it actually was God’s Word they were proclaiming to people. You know how that is? We can tell ourselves the same lie so often we begin to believe it. They thought they were pulling one over on God.

This morning through Jeremiah, the Holy Spirit speaks to us, just like he spoke to the people in Jeremiah’s day, and says to us, “I don’t care what you are going to face and if it is going to be uncomfortable for you or if it is going to be difficult for you or if it’s not even what people want to hear, but if you have my Word, you speak it faithfully. No matter what adversity you might face, you speak my Word faithfully.” And if you think, “I’m going to pull one over on God and I’m just going to twist it and turn it a little bit or I’m going to ignore it or I’m going to tell myself my own lies that I want to hear today,” you can’t pull one over on God. That is what God tells us. Then he also says, “In any case, why would you?” You have the most powerful thing in the world. You have the Word of God in your hearts, in your minds, and at your fingertips. It’s the greatest tool you have in life, so use it.

Do you remember Jeremiah? Do you remember him at all from the Bible?—a prophet that was called to be a prophet during a dark time in Israel’s history. In fact, when God called him to be a prophet, he said, “I am going to make you a bronze wall. People are going to be upset with you. They are going to throw things at you, but because I am going to make you a bronze wall, you will be able to take it all.” “Thanks God, that’s just what I wanted to hear.” But that was his ministry. And time after time, he spoke God’s Word and he got thrown in jail a couple of times. The king took the scroll that he had written, the Words from God, and chopped it up as he read it and threw it into the fire while sitting right there.

Jeremiah had a tough life as a prophet. It was made ever tougher at times probably by these false prophets that were saying, “I had a dream! I had a dream, and guess what? My dream says Jeremiah is wrong. God really likes us. God is really happy with us. Can’t you see from how things are going so well and we are prospering? There is prosperity in the land. That must mean that God loves us. We are doing just the right thing, folks, keep it up.” But Jeremiah was calling them to repentance and saying, “the big bad enemy is coming and they are going to carry you off. They are going to take you off into captivity if you don’t return to the Lord your God and turn away from these sins that you are caught up in.” So, a message of “peace, peace; God loves us” or “repent, repent; you are going to be destroyed”—guess which one the people preferred. And they told themselves that message often enough that they began to believe it.

So God has to come and say through Jeremiah to these lying prophets, “Am I only a God nearby and not a God far away? Is there any place you can go and I don’t know your lies that you are telling? Do you really think you can pull one over on me? The One who created the world? The One who knows your very thoughts, the very inclinations of your heart? I know you through and through and you are thinking you are pulling one over on me?” Sin doesn’t increase our spiritual intelligence.

So Jeremiah spoke and Jeremiah was rejected and they went off into captivity. But that's not us, right? Think about it. Do we ever tell ourselves the same lie over and over again, so much so that maybe we believed it? I would say there is one lie that maybe a lot of us tell to ourselves over and over again and we have probably said it often enough so that we believe it, and I would put forth that the lie is "I'm too busy for time for God. I don't have the time. I'm rushing here and I'm rushing there. I don't have the time to spend as much time with God as I know I should. I really should, but I just don't have the time."

Do we repeat that often enough that we accept it as fact? Just think about it a minute. Think about the content of that lie that Satan has ingrained in us. Understand that I know we are all busy, I know we are chasing our tails half the time and it seems like we are going in circles. One day last week I think I was back and forth to Appleton two or three times, I don't remember. It seems like I am just chasing my tail half the time and I know that's how your life is also. We have so many labor-saving devices that we fill our time taking care of them and earning the money so we can buy more labor-saving devices instead of just saving labor and enjoying life.

But have you looked at the Meditations Booklet recently? Those of you that have them at home; really think about it, how long does it take you to read those two columns? Honestly, could you do it during a commercial break? Or do you really want to say the commercial along with the caveman again for the 20<sup>th</sup> or 30<sup>th</sup> time? Could we shut off the television after we have watched the news and then say, "Lord, I need your help after I see how rotten this world is." Are there ways that we actually could squeeze God in for five minutes?

It sounds so simple, but it's so hard to do because we buy into that we are too busy, I believe, and I am the same way. I kid myself into thinking that as the pastor, I am preparing sermons, I'm preparing classes, so then I can push aside my own personal Bible study time because I am doing this work. And I convince myself sometimes that's alright, and that's a lie. I need time in God's Word just like you need time in God's Word. I need time to see how much God loves me and forgives me, because this is the thing. God sees through all of our excuses. He sees them for the flimsy paper blowing in the wind that they are. He doesn't get kidded by the things we kid ourselves with, whether in this issue or some other issue of what God has said is sin. He knows the inclinations of our thoughts. He knows the times that we say this, but our thoughts are, "I really just don't want to take the time to do it."

The amazing, incredible thing about our God is that he doesn't strike us dead. And we at times mistake that for meaning that God must be okay with it. No, God is just gracious. God is just loving. God makes it okay, not because it doesn't bother him. It bothered him so much that he had to leave heaven and become one of us. He had to be beaten and whipped and crucified because God was so upset over the lies that we tell ourselves. He doesn't strike us dead because he struck himself dead.

Christ took away every last one of those sins that we commit and God, who knows our filthy, rotten, stinking, wretched thoughts even, the things that we hide from each other we can't hide them from God, he still loves us in spite of that and took away every last

one of our sins. We can't pull one over on God, and we don't need to. We say, "Lord, forgive me. I have failed you again. My good intentions are just gone. They have run away and are washed down the river. But I know I have sinned, Lord, forgive me. Take away that sin." And in Christ he does. And in Christ's body and blood, he says, "Here is how much I love you. Here is the extent I went to to take away those lies you tell yourself." And then when we hear "Go in peace. Your sins are forgiven." We stand up and we know that we WANT to do this. We DON'T HAVE to do this. Christianity isn't about these rules of what we HAVE to do. We WANT to do what God tells us to and we WANT to avoid what he says not to do because he loved us enough to die and take away all of the things that we kid ourselves about.

That is why we want to spend time in God's Word, not because we have to, not because we should, but because that is where we get closer, that is where we walk hand in hand with the One who loved us enough to die for us. That is why we rejoice in coming to his altar and receiving his body and blood, because that is where he makes it so tangible for us, his love for us that forgives our sins. Then we want to make use of this Word that he gives us, this powerful Word.

Don't you just love the pictures he uses to describe his powerful Word, the reminder for these false prophets? "Don't mess with my Word. It's a fire that is going to burn away the impurities and right now, you are just all impurity, so be aware and be advised. Turn back to me or you'll die eternally." Or it's like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces. Think about that picture. I love that picture, because every now and then I will have to come over to church or over to school to pick up something in the morning that I forgot, and I don't always manage to put on my shoes. You kids have seen that at school. You've seen me barefoot walking through school, haven't you? Did you ever step barefoot on a rock on the sidewalk? Do you know how much that hurts? A little, stinking, little dinky, little pebble and you step on it in the right spot on your foot and it about makes you jump like you've stepped on a knife? At least it does me. Think about it. If you had a hammer with you, think what that hammer would do to that little pebble that caused you so much grief. You'd grab that hammer and you would smash it and it would never hurt you again, right?

God's Word is that powerful. The little things Satan uses to trip us up, the little things that he uses to trip us and bring pain into our lives as we hurt ourselves and hurt others through our sins, God's Word is that hammer that smashes it. He takes it away and it makes us want to avoid it in the future. That is the glorious power that is in this Word. It's the fire that has burned away our sins, burned away our impurities before God. It purifies us so that we are holy in his sight, but also so that we want to serve him.

So yes, maybe at times when we speak God's Word faithfully people will get upset with us. So be it. But do we really want to set aside that kind of power that is in God's Word just so that we can have a little bit of comfort?

Speak God's Word faithfully. "What does straw have to do with grain," the Holy Spirit said. The Word is the grain. It is the nourishment for our souls. It strengthens us. It sustains us. Don't trade it in for a meal of straw, but dig into that Word and then speak it faithfully.