



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

www.mzluth.org

July 2, 2023

Pastor James Enderle

5th Sunday after Pentecost

First Lesson/Sermon Text: [Jeremiah 19:14-20:6](#)

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 31 CW

Second Lesson: [Acts 23:1-11](#)

Gospel Lesson: [Matthew 10:24-33](#)

The Holy Ministry Preaches Christ in Spite of Persecution The Trouble with the Truth

1. God's _____ will be _____
2. The _____ in us to be _____
3. The _____ will bring _____
4. _____ your _____ to God; find _____ in Him

Welcome to worship today at Morrison Zion Lutheran Church. We exist to glorify God. We have set out to do this by gathering around the Gospel so that we may grow in the Gospel and go to others with this Gospel.

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from Jesus Christ, our Lord:

I think you might be able to say that the truth is something kind of hard to come by today. We talk about fake news or just the fact that with post-modernism people say "You can have your truth and I can have my truth, and who are you to say that I'm wrong or that you're right?" Everyone has their own experiences so the idea of truth is kind of a different thing in our world right now.

But there are other times where we know that there is a truth and we want to speak it but we know it might not bring the best thing for us. There is **trouble with the truth**. This might be played out in simple ways sometimes. Think about your loved one, maybe a wife/spouse, who puts on that dress and they say "How does it look?" Do you want to be truthful or do you want to show love and not upset your wife? Or a child is singing and she is having a great time singing and says "How does it sound, daddy?" Maybe she doesn't have that talent and you don't want to hurt her, so maybe you don't exactly share the truth. We know sometimes sharing that truth brings trouble with it. There is trouble when sometimes people don't like what we have to say. They don't like the truth.

While those instances are a little more harmless, we know that it's true in our lives, especially spiritually, that people struggle with the truth. For Jeremiah, this is how things

were. We know that Jeremiah was told and called to share the truth to the Israelites and God had told Him this from when he was called, but he told them that it was going to be a hard thing. When Jeremiah was called, this is his call back in [Chapter 1](#).

The word of the LORD came to me, saying,

“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.”

“Alas, Sovereign LORD,” I said, “I do not know how to speak; I am too young.”

You see the similarities to just a few weeks ago where Moses had reasons—“I can’t do this.” Here Jeremiah says “I can’t do this. I can’t speak.” But then God says to Jeremiah, ***“Do not say, ‘I am too young.’ You must go to everyone I send you to and say whatever I command you. Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you and will rescue you...”*** And then He says this: ***“I have put my words in your mouth. See, today I appoint you over nations and kingdoms to uproot and tear down, to destroy and overthrow, to build and to plant.”*** Notice what he was told and what his ministry was going to be like. He was going to tear down, to uproot, to destroy and overthrow. At the end, some positive things—to build and to plant, but most of his ministry was going to be difficult.

This is what we find in [Jeremiah 19](#). As he had been out sharing, God had told him to go out into the city and he took a clay pot—this is earlier in [Chapter 19](#). When clay isn’t hard yet, what can you do with it? You can mold it. There is hope for it. But once it becomes hard, if it has gone bad, there is really no good use for it. If it is deformed or a little busted, you just have to start over and crush it. This is what he does in front of a few people, but then God has him go not just in front of people in the city but to the temple courts. He explains what is going to happen to Jerusalem. ***“This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: ‘Listen! I am going to bring on this city and all the villages around it every disaster I pronounced against them, because they were stiff-necked and would not listen to my words.’”*** He is telling them, these things that God has said will happen will happen because what? They are stiff-necked and have not listened. He is telling them God’s truth has been rejected and *God’s truth will be rejected*.

That’s what God told him at the beginning of his ministry. Jeremiah had this 40-year ministry and what was it to do? To tell the people over and over again that they sinned, that they are turning away, and judgment was coming. What did people do to this truth? Do they say “Oh, okay, we have sinned and we repent”? No! They rejected the message. God had Law and Gospel in that message. If you repent, He would relent, but they didn’t. Not only that, there were all these prophets who preached a different

message—there was Pashhur and all the different people that the kings and everyone else wanted. They gathered them around to teach the things they wanted to hear.

Are God's truths rejected today? Are there things that we know are true but people just don't want to hear them? While we get the joy of sharing the Gospel, we know that we share things that people just don't want to hear as well, even the Gospel. The Gospel says that Jesus has died for us and He is the way to heaven, and people say "Well, that's not very inclusive because you're saying those other religions are wrong. How can you be right and they be wrong?" There are so many truths that we know God has given us that people just don't want to hear and they reject them.

What happens because of that? For Jeremiah, it says that he was beaten and put in stocks. For us, as we share the truth, there are consequences. We might lose friends. There are all sorts of things that happen, but we continue to share. Why?

Let's look in the words that follow, in [Chapter 20](#). I think the section that we have in our Service Folder to look at doesn't give us the whole story. It tells us a little bit about what is happening, but right after this, I encourage you to look at that section a little bit more, maybe in your devotion this week. The rest of [Chapter 20](#) is Jeremiah talking to God. He is sharing what his thoughts are and what is going on. He is pretty direct and honest with God. We don't really expect this. As I teach this with the 7th-8th Graders, we always talk about Jeremiah and what he did. But then I have them read this section because it's very raw of what someone who is facing persecution and speaking the truth faces. He says this in [Verse 9](#), just a few verses after the section in our text.

***But if I say, "I will not mention his word
or speak anymore in his name,"
his word is in my heart like a fire,
a fire shut up in my bones.
I am weary of holding it in;
indeed, I cannot.***

What he is saying is that even though people reject it, even though it is hard sharing the truth, *the truth burns in us to be shared*. Jeremiah continued to face opposition. He was beaten. He had all this difficulty and this 40-year ministry. We don't know exactly when he shared this, but he is sharing a message that people do not want to hear, over and over again. But he says "If I hold it in, it burns inside."

Do you have that feeling with God's Word too? When you are speaking with a co-worker or a friend and they are talking about difficult things and there is this burning to share God's Word? You have this hope and this peace that comes from God and you say, "I just need to share this with you." Sometimes we have the opportunity to do so. Sometimes, even though we have that burning, it just doesn't come out. Maybe it's at

work and we're afraid of what someone might say. Maybe it's some Law. Maybe someone is living together before marriage and you are afraid what they might actually say if you said, "What does God say about that and how that affects you and your marriage life?" There are those things where we often know what we want to say and sometimes, even though it's burning in our hearts that we just want to share God's Word, both Law and Gospel, it's hard. Sometimes it comes out and sometimes it doesn't.

But as that is burning when we share that truth, we know what happens isn't always good. Jeremiah, in that same section, just a few verses where he says it burns in his heart, why is it burning and why is it difficult? He says this to God in [Verse 7](#):

***You deceived me, Lord, and I was deceived;
you overpowered me and prevailed.
I am ridiculed all day long;
everyone mocks me.***

He is saying "God, you said I was going to be your prophet and you really got me to do this, but man, this is hard! You are stronger than I am. You won out. I have become a laughing stock all day long and everyone is mocking me. When I speak, I cry out violence and destruction. But the Word of the Lord has brought scorn on me. I am mocked all day long." A few verses later:

***I hear many whispering,
"Terror on every side!
Denounce him! Let's denounce him!"
All my friends
are waiting for me to slip, saying,
"Perhaps he will be deceived;
then we will prevail over him
and take our revenge on him."***

How would you describe those words that Jeremiah is speaking to God about his work as a prophet? Is it very uplifting? He is crying out and saying "Look at all the things that speaking your Word has done! People mock me and they are sitting there waiting for me to fall and make a mistake!" It doesn't sound like he is very happy. He is struggling. I think it is important for us to see that as we preach the truth, *the truth will bring trouble*. That's what Jeremiah is saying. There is this trouble that he faces and it's real. We can't pretend that if we're going to speak the truth that everyone is going to love it and everything is going to be fine and dandy. We know that is true for churches. If churches change and they say what the world wants them to say, then maybe things are easier, but if we hold to the truth, not everyone is going to want to hear that. So Jeremiah explains and says "People want to see me fall."

You might feel that way as you share Law and Gospel. You maybe point out a sin and say "Hey, this is a problem for you. It is going to hurt you and others." People might start pointing to you and say, "Who are you to call out a sin? You're a hypocrite!" They'll point and say, "I know what YOU have done!" People who know you are sometimes the hardest to share with. People who know your past and the things that you've done and maybe the things you might do. The people we share with are sometimes waiting to see you fall so they can point and laugh and say "Oh, but you do the same thing!" But we know that it's not about US. It's about the message and truth we preach. It's about our God.

So here, Jeremiah is speaking his complaints to God. He is bringing his troubles to God and then he is going to find strength in Him. Even though there is trouble all around and it's hard, notice who he is speaking to. He is speaking to God. He's not going around to all the people and saying "Oh, this is hard! I'm miserable." He is bringing his complaints to God. This is telling us, *bring your troubles to God; find strength in Him.*

When I was a missionary, I remember one special missionary conference where some older missionaries were sharing how they encouraged us. "You don't have a lot of people to talk to, but what is very easy to do is to complain about the mission work or maybe other people in the mission field or things with your family. Be very careful about that because your kids will hear that and it will affect them. It will affect how they see God and the work that you are doing. They'll have this idea about those people and who God is and the mission. So be careful who you share those complaints with." I think that is an encouragement for us, all of us, as we work here and serve, to be careful how we share the difficulties and challenges; to bring them before God and to find that we have strength in Him as well.

Right after he talks about those complaints, he says this in [Chapter 20](#) as well.

***But the Lord is with me like a mighty warrior;
so my persecutors will stumble and not prevail.
They will fail and be thoroughly disgraced;
their dishonor will never be forgotten.
Lord Almighty, you who examine the righteous
and probe the heart and mind,
let me see your vengeance on them,
for to you I have committed my cause.***

***Sing to the Lord!
Give praise to the Lord!
He rescues the life of the needy
from the hands of the wicked.***

Here he is complaining at one second and then what is he doing? He is praising God and finding strength in Him.

We can do that too, as we speak honestly with God. That's what the Psalms often really are. David speaks very honestly with God about things he is struggling with and when other people are trying to take over the throne and the opposition he faces, but yet we find strength and peace in what God has done for us and who He is. The way that we find that the most, I think, is by understanding persecution and what we face.

I recently read a book in a pastor coaching program, where you read a book each month. This book was called What God Thinks about our Bodies. It was mainly a lot about health, but it was a very spiritual book that talked a lot about Jesus and how He understands us. It said there are often times where we say Jesus is our High Priest (the Bible is very clear about that) and because of that, He is not like other high priests. He has been in our place. He understands what it is like to be tempted and to be a person; to struggle with sin and grief and pain.

Think about some of the things we struggle with. Maybe it's struggling with sitting down and watching TV for a long time, or struggling with driving too fast. We say "How did Jesus struggle with some of those things?" He struggled with the similar temptations and things, maybe not the exact same thing, but the same type of temptations and pain. But when it comes to persecution, I think it is a little bit different.

There is no question that Jesus was persecuted for speaking the truth. That's the reason why He was put on the cross. He was mocked. He was beaten. He was called the devil. For what reason? For speaking the truth. How did He react when He was persecuted? When He was persecuted, when He was put on the cross, what did He do? He continued to speak the truth, and He spoke love and forgiveness. ***"Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."*** [\(Luke 23:34\)](#)

So when we struggle with persecution and say "God, it's hard!" and we know that as the feeling to share that burns in our hearts and we don't share perfectly, we don't share when we want to, we know we are forgiven; not just because Jesus went to the cross to die for those sins but because He lived perfectly in our place. He was persecuted and beaten and mocked, and He was innocent. He spoke the truth and continued to do so and did so perfectly for you. So we find strength in knowing that our Lord and Savior was perfect in our place and died for you. This is that message, that truth we get to share.

I think as we go back and we look at Jeremiah, read [Chapter 20](#) because here he is upset and angry and he is praising God, and we say "It's great! It's good." In the next verses, he even curses the day that he was born. It was hard for Jeremiah! But his message,

while there was a little bit of Gospel, what was it mainly? It was a lot of Law. It was a lot of judgment coming, and he witnessed the fall of Jerusalem. We can look and understand how hard it would have been for him, yet he struggled with that but found peace and hope in God.

What are we asked to go share? Yes, we do share Law at times, but really, we say over and over again, what are we to do to? We are to share that Gospel. We are to go and say "God, so loved the world. Jesus died for you, just believe it. Know it's true that your sins are forgiven." But what do we do so often? "It's too hard. People will mock me. People won't believe me." Yet we have this beautiful truth. And it's so important for us to share. Why?

We heard it in the Gospel Lesson. Those who acknowledge Him, Jesus will acknowledge before the Father. Those who do not acknowledge Him will be disowned. As the truth brings trouble, as it brought trouble for Jeremiah, there was even greater trouble for those around him. He called Pashhur not easy, not smooth, but terror on every side.

While speaking the truth may bring us trouble, for those who don't know about the Gospel and forgiveness, it's not just a temporary trouble. It's an eternal damnation. It's being eternally lost. So the encouragement is to find strength in the Lord, to overcome those fears of a temporary trouble or even a hurt friendship from time to time; to share the truth of that Gospel. There is certainly trouble with sharing the truth, but we know it is so important to share that love and forgiveness with others. God has called us to do that; to share that message of peace and forgiveness so that more and more people can avoid that trouble, and to know our Savior forever in heaven. Amen.

And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. [\(Philippians 4:7\)](#) Amen.