

Jeremiah 26:8-15

**Theme:** Listen when God speaks

When we hear things we don't want to hear, we may become angry. Depending on our maturity, may retort with phrases like, "I know you are, but what am I?" or "I'm rubber, you're glue; whatever you say bounces off me and sticks to you!" Sometimes, we reach the point of irritation where, like Miracle Max in *The Princess Bride*, we shout, "Lalala! I'm not listening!" We raise our voices in anger or become physically violent. And why? Because words struck a chord – truth we don't want to admit because it means admitting we're wrong.

Such reactions were the routine for Jeremiah, the prophet who delivered God's words to Judah before Babylonian captivity. Jeremiah warned the people for years this would happen so they should repent, return to God, and they'd be forgiven, restored, and could keep living in Israel. They didn't listen and brought judgment and destruction. God's promise of a Savior to the world from Israel would remain, so they'd return, but his wrath would soon be vested in full on them.

Rage was the reaction because people can be, not just patriotic, supporting the land in which they live, praying for it, and like patriots, calling out the junk it does through the appropriate civic channels to improve it. Patriotism is fine and good. What can happen, though, is that people slip into nationalism where the nation is seen as infallible, exceptional, extra blessed, trusted unswervingly, with other nations seen as brutishly inferior. Nationalism is idolatry. The nation, the place, the idea of themselves, along with false gods, is what the Israelites were worshipping. Jeremiah preached against this. "How dare you say this against Jerusalem! It's Jerusalem! Other prophets say the opposite, Jeremiah!" they said. The pride and manufactured sense of security was in a place, so God would destroy that place to reframe their perspective to see that being right with him is of true importance, nothing else comes close.

In my experience as a pastor, I've found that people are more often likely to become offended and downright hostile when you question their politics or if their patriotism is beyond healthy, but not when their faith or understanding of Scripture is called into question. This is a sobering observation because it reveals how worldly we are but don't wanna admit. Because we so often hang our hats on worldly things and in this context, nations, we do come to trust and rely on them at the expense of listening to God and living in line with his kingdom instead of the morality and ethos of the nations of this world – anyone of which can be raised up and or brought low as God wills whenever he wills it.

God promised and sent his Son to save the people in the world, not to fix what's broken about society – which doesn't mean to not help where you can in your sphere of influence! It is not the church's job to partner with a nation to fix it or reform the nation. It is the church's job to broadcast the gospel to the lost in it and keep the found saved using the gospel. The church does this with the help of the Almighty Holy Spirit. Christian, look to Christ, his Word, and other Christians for encouragement in gospel work never looking to a nation of this world for help. That isn't their job. Their job is to bear the sword to enforce civic peace – not bring you the gospel.

When God speaks, let's adopt the mindset of Samuel and say, "Speak, Lord, your servant is listening," and then actually listen when God speaks! God only tells us what is good for us and only tells us to do what is good for us and never tells us to do what is bad for us, never gives harmful information. This is true even when we don't want to hear what God says because it's uncomfortable. Let's keep this in mind as we listen to him.

When Jeremiah finished saying what the LORD charged him to say, the people cried, "*You must die!*"<sup>9</sup> *Why do you prophesy in the LORD's name that this house will be like Shiloh and this city will be*

*desolate and deserted?” (Jeremiah 26:8-9) Rather than admit Jeremiah, God really, was even a little bit right, they masked their discomfort with rage. They didn’t wanna hear that they’d be like Shiloh, a place deserted by God because there the Ark was used as a good luck charm. Wanting Jeremiah to be dead, they dragged him to the king and found him guilty. Of what? Not false doctrine. Not contradicting Moses. Treason, as they defined it, “*This man should be sentenced to death because he has prophesied against this city. You have heard it with your own ears,*” (Jeremiah 26:11) said the priests!*

Not that it was easy, but Jeremiah, chosen by God before his birth, found contentment in serving the Lord despite human opposition. In faithful service to God, he matter-of-factly said, “*The LORD sent me to prophesy against this house and this city all the things you have heard.*”<sup>13</sup> *Now reform your ways and your actions and obey the LORD your God. Then the LORD will relent and not bring the disaster he has pronounced against you.*<sup>14</sup> *As for me, I am in your hands; do with me whatever you think is good and right.*<sup>15</sup> *Be assured, however, that if you put me to death, you will bring down the guilt of innocent blood on yourselves and on this city and on those who live in it, for in truth the LORD has sent me to you to speak all these words in your hearing.” (Jeremiah 26:12-15) Vengeance is God’s and, in faith, Jeremiah let it be. When God speaks, let’s listen and pray for the strength of faith to accept and trust. When God calls us to speak for him, rely on him and rejoice to speak his words, free from fear of reprisal from people because you know that heaven awaits.*

There’s little gospel in this section of Scripture, but what there is, is incredibly concentrated and potent. The LORD relents. That’s the gospel. When we repent of whatever it is, when we acknowledge our sin to the Lord not covering up our guilt, and say, “Yes, Lord, I did that. I know it, you know. I’m sorry.” God forgives. God forgives our rage when sin’s pointed out by God in his Word or when a sister or brother points it out in love and in hope of leading me to the restoration of repentance and forgiveness. God promises to faithfully and fully and freely forgive for Jesus’ sake. Forgiveness was earned by Jesus during a life of taking abuse from people when he shared the truth in all aspects of God’s love for them. The cross of Christ, the innocent blood Jesus shed willingly in love is the substance of your forgiveness, it’s your salvation, and his empty tomb is your power to live a forgiven life.

Listen when God speaks: “*For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.*” (Jeremiah 31:34) Listen when God speaks: “*Who is a God like you, who pardons sin and forgives the transgression of the remnant of his inheritance? You do not stay angry forever but delight to show mercy.*” (Micah 7:18) Listen when Jesus says: “*Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.*” (Luke 23:34) We weren’t before the cross, but this is the Savior Jesus’ heart to us, too, since it’s our sin and the many ways we put other things before him and worship them which caused him to be nailed to it but it was his love to remove those sins from us which kept him there until the eternal suffering we deserved was completed so that we would only know God’s love which is at work in us now so powerfully. Because it is, we are able to, “*Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.*” (Ephesians 4:32).

We do so in peace knowing Christ is our peace. Preach Christ. Proclaim God’s truth, all of it. Tell someone this week about his will to save sinners. Listen to God when he speaks because what God wants is your salvation, for you to keep on believing in Jesus, and for you to be with him in his house safe and saved forever. Amen.