

Last Judgment – November 10, 2019
Good Shepherd Ev. Lutheran Church

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Jeremiah 26:1-6 (NIV)

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 their evil ways.** Then I will relent and not inflict 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 a curse among all the nations of the earth.' "

I imagine that you may have heard this pearl of wisdom or one of its variations before: "we remember 10% of what we hear, 20% of what we read, 50% of what we do." I've heard that statement used by businesses promoting their products as well as by professors explaining theories of education. I always wondered how you could measure what people remember! Did they take a test 10 minutes after they heard something, an hour, a day a week or years later? How could you account for the fact that some things we hear are much more important than others and so they are more likely to be remembered? What about the fact that people learn in different ways? I don't know if I'll ever find out answers to those questions – but I do know that God created us with two ears and that when it comes to listening to him – he wants us to use them to listen to his words.

In our OT Lesson for today the Lord himself gave a command to his faithful prophet Jeremiah to tell the people who assembled for worship everything he had commanded them without omitting a word. "Perhaps they will listen ..." the Lord told Jeremiah. Although as the Lord indicated in his message to his people -- they had repeatedly refused to listen to the prophets (including Jeremiah) whom he had sent.

You and I also have a hard time listening to what the Lord has to say – so the encouragement: Listen to What the Lord Says is one we need to not only hear but take to heart.

Theme: Listen to What the Lord Says

1. There is condemnation for those who do not listen and who reject his words
2. There is grace for those who listen and turn from their evil ways

Jehoaikim had recently become the king of Judah and the Lord had a message for him. It was a message he had first given to Jehoaikim's grandfather King Josiah who had taken it to heart. The Lord wanted the new king to know that he would stand by the threats and the promises that he had made. The Lord had threatened to bring the temple to ruin if the people of Judah did not repent. The Lord promised that he would not carry out this threat if the people repented of their sin.

It was a hard message to speak and an even harder one to hear but his fear of the Lord and his love for his people compelled Jeremiah to be faithful in his calling as the Lord's spokesmen. Sadly as soon as **soon as Jeremiah finished telling all the people everything the LORD had commanded him to say, the priests, the prophets and all the people seized him and said, "You must die!** (Jeremiah 26:8 NIV) His message had fallen on deaf ears – they heard only the threat of destruction and not the promise of grace.

The apostle Peter acted in a similar way when **esus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law,**

and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life. (22) Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. "Never, Lord!" he said. "This shall never happen to you!" (Matthew 16:21-22 NIV)

Peter only heard half of what Jesus said – he processed the bad news about Jesus but failed to hear the good news – that on the Lord Jesus would be raised to life. Today for some reason or other it often happens that people only process part of the information that they hear as well. A doctor may be discussing the results of a test with his patient and the patient's family explaining that they have discovered cancer. He or she will go on to explain treatment options. Then the doctor will pause to ask if there are any questions. The patient asks, "It's not cancer, is it."

The same is often true in regard to how people today hear the word of the Lord – we often fail to hear the Lord's condemnation of sin and his call for repentance. Why else would people be willing to excuse and even defend actions like homosexuality, abortion or divorce which the Lord clearly condemns? God is love they say. But they ignore God's righteous anger over unrepented sin. Either they do not hear the Lord's call to repentance or they do not understand what repentance is.

And what about us? Do we hear what God says about our sins? Do we really hear what he says about our sins? Does the message that "*There is condemnation for those who do not listen and who reject his words*" get through to us when hear the ten commandments or does it get lost in the translation?

Sadly the message often does not get through – we don't put the Lord first in our lives, we're not willing to trust that anything is possible with him. We fail to rely on him to bless us and to enable us to do what he commands. We're not willing to love him with all our heart – we often let other things take his place. The frequency with which we allow such sins to take root in our lives and our lack of horror over these sins suggests that we are not hearing the Lord's decree that there is condemnation for those who do these things or that we are not taking his call for repentance seriously.

Perhaps at this point it might be helpful to remind our selves of what repentance is. The Augsburg Confession puts it beautifully.

Repentance nothing else than to have contrition and sorrow, or terror, on account of sin, and yet at the same time to believe the Gospel and absolution (namely, that sin has been forgiven and grace has been obtained through Christ), and this faith will comfort the heart and again set it at rest. Amendment of life and the forsaking of sin should then follow, for these must be the fruits of repentance, as John says, "Bear fruit that befits repentance" (Matthew 3:8).

Notice that genuine repentance has two parts to it and one result. The first part is to confess and admit the sin in question and have sorrow because of it. The repentant person is done with cover ups and excuses. He sees himself as the guilty one not the victim. All this fills him with sorrow and disgust and fear of God's punishment. The second part, which is by far the most important, is to believe that because of the atonement of Jesus Christ on the cross, the sin has been forgiven. Unfortunately, many seem to think that what brings us forgiveness or atonement is our confessing the sin. This is utterly false for it turns our confession into a good work by which we seek to make atonement for our own sin. Forgiveness comes only when we believe the Gospel which teaches us that our sin is forgiven not because of our confession or sorrow, but because of the atonement of Jesus at the cross. If repentance is genuine it always brings an important result: the sinful behavior is stopped, the proper behavior is begun. These are the fruits that are spoken of in Matthew 3:8 above.

According to the Bible, those who are truly sorry for their sins and trust in Jesus as their Savior also want to turn away from their sins, intending with the help of the Holy Spirit to stop living a life of sin. If we

want to keep on sinning, we need to ask ourselves if we have really repented. However, we are weak human beings and although we do not want to commit the same sins again and again, we may sometimes fall into sin out of weakness.

Whenever we sin, we know (as John says) that **"if we confess our sins, [God] is faithful and just and will forgive our sins" for the sake of Jesus our Savior** (1 Jn.1:9). If repentance becomes a "game" with God and we don't really want or intend to stop committing a certain sin (say stealing), and we go on stealing, living always in that sin of stealing, then we place ourselves in grave spiritual danger. We need to ask that God the Holy Spirit to give us the power to stop committing that sin and trust Him to help us fight against it.

Many times of course we find ourselves struggling and wrestling with sin just like the apostle Paul did. Together with him we confess – (Romans 7:15 NIV) ***I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do.*** This is not the same as living in sin even if the sin is one we have committed over and over again because the struggle is evidence of the fact that we have heard God's law with its words of condemnation and taken them to heart.

There's one more important comment that we need to hear in regard to repentance and the faith which is a part of it – such repentance is the worked through the word of God – the law reminds us that wages of sin is death but the Gospel assures us that the gift of God is eternal life through faith in Christ Jesus. (Ephesians 2:8 NIV) assures us: **it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—**

(Romans 10:17 NIV) Consequently, faith **comes from hearing** the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ. [Since] faith **comes from hearing** the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ. (Romans 10:17 NIV) may God enable us to listen to what the Lord says with a full awareness of our sins and weaknesses.

- 1. There is condemnation for those who do not listen and who reject his words**
- 2. There is grace for those who listen and turn from their evil ways**

At first blush our text for today seems to be a bit heavy on the law side. The Gospel doesn't immediately jump out at us. The Lord himself spent 3 verses of this text with his message of condemnation and those were the heart and core of the message Jeremiah addressed to the people in the courtyard. This text includes only 1 verse that speaks of his grace for those who listen and repent. However as we will shortly discover there is evidence of his grace also in those verses which announce his condemnation.

We've been listening a long time already but please don't stop now! Take a deep breath. Switch ears if you have too. Listen to the words of the Lord: **Perhaps they will listen and each will turn from their evil ways. Then I will relent and not inflict on them the disaster I was planning because of the evil they have done.**

The apostle Paul reminded Timothy -- (1 Timothy 2:3-4 NIV) ... **God our Savior ... wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.** On another occasion Paul reminded Timothy that this fact would compel him to gently instruct any who would oppose his message as the Lord's servant (2 Timothy 2:25-26 NIV) ... **in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, 26) and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will.**

As we have already seen repentance in the broadest sense of the word includes trusting in the Lord's promises of forgiveness. At time of Jeremiah, King Josiah looked to the Lord's promises and by God's grace

did not live to see the Lord carry out his threats against the temple and Jerusalem. By God's grace, Peter turned to Jesus following his threefold denial of Christ and lived. And by God's grace the Apostle Paul turned away from his evil persecution of Christ and those who confessed his resurrection and boldly proclaimed a message of forgiveness of sins in the name of Christ Jesus.

The Lord's promise to Jeremiah of relenting and not bring disaster because of the evil done by the people he created still stands even today. While stressing the fact that the Lord will come as judge of all nations he assures us -- (2 Peter 3:9 NIV) **The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.**

The very fact then that the Lord sent Jeremiah to warn the people of his time of their sins is evidence of his desire to bless them with his grace and forgiveness. The Lord said, **If you do not listen to me and follow my law, which I have set before you... then I will make this house (the temple) and this city (Jerusalem) an object of cursing among all the nations of the earth.** The Lord's condemnation was not a done deal at this time – he was holding out hope to his rebellious people.

The Lord also holds out hope to us. Listen as Paul expresses that hope: (1 Timothy 1:15 NIV) **Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners...**

There is grace for those who listen and turn from their evil ways. In his grace God sent Jesus into the world to save sinners. Jesus lived the perfect life that we are unable to live. He did it for us. He took the punishment that our sins deserve upon himself – suffering our hell on the cross. He rose from the dead to assure us that our sins have been paid for and that we are at peace with God.

Listen to the promises of the Lord spoken by Isaiah: (Isaiah 1:18 NIV) **"Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool."** Listen to the promises of the Lord spoken by the Apostle John: (1 John 1:7-10 NIV) **The blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. 8) If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. 9) If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 2:1 NIV) My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense--Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.**

Over and over again the Lord decrees to us that there is grace for those who listen and repent. Dear friends, Listen to What the Lord Says. Did you hear what the Lord has decreed? Listen once more

1. There is condemnation for those who do not listen and who reject his words
2. There is grace for those who listen and turn from their evil ways <click>

Listen and see with your eyes

1. There is condemnation for those who do not listen and who reject his words
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See with your eyes and repeat together with me:

1. There is condemnation for those who do not listen and who reject his words
2. There is grace for those who listen and turn from their evil ways

Amen.