

INI - SDG

17<sup>th</sup> Sunday a. Trinity  
October 4, 2009  
Prince of Peace Lutheran Church  
Hecla, SD

Text: Jeremiah 11:18-20 *Now the LORD gave me knowledge of it, and I know it; for You showed me their doings. 19 But I was like a docile lamb brought to the slaughter; and I did not know that they had devised schemes against me, saying, "Let us destroy the tree with its fruit, and let us cut him off from the land of the living, that his name may be remembered no more." 20 But, O LORD of hosts, You who judge righteously, Testing the mind and the heart, Let me see Your vengeance on them, For to You I have revealed my cause.*

Theme: "COMMIT YOUR WAY UNTO THE LORD"

- Vengeance
- Salvation

Dear fellow redeemed in Christ Jesus,

We like to take things into our own hands, don't we. As children, when our brother or sister hits us, we feel absolutely justified in hitting them back. Our rock-solid defense at the time is, "He hit me first." Sure we could wait for Mom or Dad to find out about it and punish him, but why wait, we can dish out justice ourselves and it feels much more fulfilling if we do it. As we get older we may not strike back when struck all the time, but we still like to take things into our own hands.

Our text for today reminds us that it is not our job to take things into our own hands, but instead, as Psalm 37 says, to "Commit Your Way Unto the LORD." It is one thing to take things into our own hands for vengeance, it is an entirely different thing when it comes to our salvation. May God bless our study of His holy Word!

### ***VENGEANCE***

As long as sin has been in the world, there has been a desire to silence the Word of God. When Joseph told of the dreams God had given him, his brothers sold him into slavery. When Stephen testified to the Jewish counsel that Jesus Christ was the promised Savior of the world, he was stoned to death. Peter and Paul were thrown into prison several times for preaching Jesus Christ and Him crucified. According to tradition, all the apostles except John died a martyr's death for preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ. And so the Church has been persecuted in an attempt to silence the Word of God.

We find the same thing happening to the prophet Jeremiah. The LORD had chosen Jeremiah to be His spokesman. Jeremiah was to tell the people of Judah everything that the LORD commanded him to say. And the message Jeremiah brought the people wasn't good. Though the recent spiritual reformation that took place under King Josiah seemed promising, the people continued to harbor idolatrous ways in their hearts. Soon the people would return to worshipping false idols. It would become so bad that the LORD says of them, "***According to the number of your cities were your gods, O Judah; and according to the number of the streets of***

***Jerusalem you have set up altars to that shameful thing, altars to burn incense to Baal.”***  
(18:13)

Because they had broken the covenant God had made with them by going to other gods to worship them, God would punish them for their spiritual adultery. ***“Behold, I will surely bring calamity on them which they will not be able to escape; and though they cry out to Me, I will not listen to them. Then the cities of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem will go and cry out to the gods to whom they offer incense, but they will not save them at all in the time of their trouble.”*** (18:11-12) This was the message that Jeremiah was charged with bringing to the people of Judah. Soon the Babylonian army led by King Nebuchadnezzar would defeat them, destroy Jerusalem, tear down its walls, and destroy the Temple. This is what Jeremiah is speaking of in our text when he says in verse 18, ***“Now the LORD gave me knowledge of it, and I know it; for You showed me their doings.”*** The LORD made known to Jeremiah was really going on in the heart of his fellow Jews.

As you might imagine, the people did not want to hear what Jeremiah had to say. They would much rather have received messages about peace and prosperity for their beloved homeland - NOT a message of judgment and destruction. Though Jeremiah was simply telling the people what God was saying, they did not want to hear it and looked for a way to silence Jeremiah. Verse 19, ***“But I was like a docile lamb brought to the slaughter; and I did not know that they had devised schemes against me, saying, ‘Let us destroy the tree with its fruit, and let us cut him off from the land of the living, that his name may be remembered no more.’”*** Somehow, the people thought that if they silenced the messenger (Jeremiah), then they would not have to face the judgment God had promised to send.

Put yourself in Jeremiah’s shoes. So how would you react to this? The LORD has selected you to bring His message to His people. Your call is simply to testify the truth. You make nothing up, you only tell them, “Thus saith the LORD...” And for your faithfulness to God what do you get in return? Death threats and persecution! You love these people. They are your fellow countrymen and your relatives. You want them to repent from their wicked ways and live! They had no one to blame but themselves for this impending judgment. They brought it on themselves by their own idolatry and now God was doing what He promised to do if they disobeyed them. And yet your life is in jeopardy.

Rather than taking things into his own hands, Jeremiah committed his way unto the LORD. He brought this matter to the LORD and asked the LORD to protect him and punish his enemies. ***“But, O LORD of hosts, You who judge righteously, testing the mind and the heart, let me see Your vengeance on them, for to You I have revealed my cause.”*** Now this may seem rather bold of Jeremiah to ask that he see God taking vengeance on his enemies. But Jeremiah was praying nothing different than what we pray in the Lord’s Prayer, “Thy Will Be Done.” How is God’s will done? ***“When God breaks every evil will and counsel, and hinders whatever would not let us hallow the name of God nor let His kingdom come, such as the will of the devil, of the world, and of our flesh; but strengthens and keeps us steadfast in His Word and in the faith unto our end. This is His gracious good will.”***

Jeremiah was praying that the Father’s will would be done on earth as it is in heaven. Those who wished to silence and destroy him, really wanted to silence and destroy the Word of God which Jeremiah was bringing. Jeremiah was asking God to hinder that evil will which wanted to cut off the spokesman of the LORD from the land of the living. But rather than taking things into his own hands, Jeremiah committed his way unto the LORD.

Few of us have ever experienced such persecution as Jeremiah faced. There are, no doubt, people that don't like you - but that probably has more to do with personality clashes than anything else. Yet, you should know that when you testify of Christ and His Word, that you will face a similar reaction from the world and the devil. They will try to silence you by making you feel "uncool" or a "loser" when you stand up for Jesus. They might not try to take your life but they will try to silence you. Rather than lashing out at them yourself, commit your way to the LORD and pray that He would hinder every evil will that would not us hallow His name or let His kingdom come.

We see the same reaction with Jesus. No man was ever treated as unjustly or unfairly as was Jesus. He was treated as the most vile criminal, though He never broke a single law. Yet the enemies of God's Word tried to silence Jesus by killing Him. Jesus certainly had the power to take things into His own hands. But instead as we heard in our New Testament lesson, "**when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously.**" (1Pt 2:23) Jesus too committed His way unto the LORD.

## **SALVATION**

A few weeks ago someone mentioned that she was disturbed to know that on the Last Day ***the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works.*** (Mt 16:27) It is scary to think that Jesus will reward each person according to what we have done with our lives. The reason that scares us is because our conscience knows how we have sinned against God.

Our conscience has the same reaction when we hear Jeremiah speak of the LORD of hosts "***who judge righteously, testing the mind and the heart.***" God judges righteously. That means His judgments and verdicts are always just and always right. He visits "***the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children to the third and the fourth generation.***" (Ex. 34:7) He has never had a bad verdict, because He always knows the truth. He tests the mind and heart of man. He does not judge externally like man, but He looks at what is going on in the mind and the heart. He knows what is going on inside each one of us. He knows what you are thinking right now.

How does that make us feel? Guilty? Afraid? Ashamed? According to the Law this should strike fear into our hearts. God knows all those shameful thoughts we've had. God knows all those unloving feelings we've had. He knows how miserably we've failed to love Him above everything else. He knows we have been very far from loving our neighbor as ourselves. If God tests the mind and heart, and judges righteously according to what He finds, we are all in trouble.

Thus we see the problem if we take our salvation into our own hands. If we stand before the judgment seat of God on our own, we stand exposed with all of our sins laid bare before the God who "***judges righteously, testing the mind and the heart.***" But return with me to our theme from Psalm 37, "Commit your way unto the LORD." When Jeremiah's life was in jeopardy he did not take things into his own hands but trusted God to take vengeance on the enemies of His Word. Remember also who it was that trusted in the LORD to do the right thing. Jeremiah, who was a sinner just as we are, trusted that the LORD of hosts would judge righteously between him and the enemies of the Church. Jeremiah could trust in the righteous judgment of the LORD because Jeremiah believed in the Gospel.

The Gospel changes everything, doesn't it. According to the Law of God we ought to fear the judgment of God. According to the Gospel we can rely on God's righteous judgment for our salvation. In the Gospel we hear that God gave His own Son as the atoning sacrifice for our sins. In Colossians 2 Paul writes, "***Having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.***" (Col 2:14) That long list of sins which were against us, God took them out of the way when He nailed them to the cross with Jesus. Jesus bore all of our sins in His body on the cross. There on the cross, God's righteous judgment against sin was carried out. Everything that God found in our sinful minds and hearts, He punished Jesus for.

The result of that Good Friday? We are forgiven. Our sins have been removed forever. Jesus "***was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification.***" (Rom 4:25) On Easter God made a declaration about us. When He raised Jesus from the dead He pronounced us, "*Not guilty.*" He accepted the payment Jesus made on the cross for our sins and God removed our debt of sin forever. Through faith in Jesus, God credits us with HIS righteousness. As God tests the mind and heart of the believer and finds faith, faith which HE created, the only deeds He sees are the deeds of Jesus His Son. HIS holy life, HIS innocent death, and HIS resurrection from the dead. This is why we commit our way unto the LORD rather than taking our salvation into our own hands.

Our sinful pride likes to think that everything would be best if we took things into our own hands. We know what is best for us. If we get slapped WE should slap right back. If we want to get to heaven, WE should get there by our own efforts and works. Yet we've seen today that is not the way to go. When we do things OUR way, we fail and cause only greater harm. Instead, humble yourself under the might hand of God and commit your way unto the LORD. Trust in Him when you are persecuted for your faith. Rely on Him for your salvation. May God help us all to this end, for Jesus sake. AMEN.