

Our Great Deliverer
Jeremiah 20:7-13

Jeremiah's life was not turning out like he thought it would. It began well. Judah had had some bad kings, but Jeremiah was born during the reign of one of the good ones – Josiah. He was born into a priestly family and became a prophet at a young age, probably before he turned twenty. Most men in Judah didn't begin any kind of public ministry before they were thirty. That's what Jesus did. God spoke to Jeremiah and made him wise and passionate.

These sound like good things, don't they? But, human nature being what it is, how do you think others reacted to these blessings? What about his older uncles in the ministry? "That young whipper-snapper! He's acting a bit big for his britches." What about his cousins who haven't been blessed in the same way, and won't be able to do anything official until they hit that thirty mark? Do you think they might be a little jealous? Do you think they would feel a little wicked pleasure if they could find a way to knock him down a notch or two?

Then there were the people with whom Jeremiah was told to share God's messages. King Josiah was good, but not so much the people in his kingdom. The economy was booming. The borders were secure. What did they need God for? Money and pleasure had become their gods. They did not want to hear Jeremiah's call for repentance and his words of impending disaster if they did not turn from their ways. And they didn't just ignore him, they vigorously opposed him, trying to silence him any way they could.

Those were the external forces at work. Then there was what was going on with Jeremiah himself. It was nearly impossible for him to enjoy everyday life. God had revealed to him the death and destruction that was going to come upon his country very soon. It frustrated and grieved him to no end that these horrors could be averted if only the people would listen his message from God. But they would not.

False prophets assured the people that everything was fine and that Jeremiah was just a grumpy crackpot.

Jeremiah's lament is understandable. *O LORD, you have deceived me, and I was deceived...* The Hebrew word translated "deceived" can also mean "enticed." It was as if Jeremiah was led into a trap. For godly people, it's easy to feel this way. The world does not love Jesus, and respect for the Word of God is not trending up. It would be far easier just to keep our heads down and be quiet. That way we wouldn't be treated like Jeremiah was.

There is no shortage of those who demonize churches and individual Christians who uphold the Word of God saying that God created the world, there is universal truth, there is only one Savior, and, in these days, that same-sex marriage is not God's design.

Christian business men and women have been sued for taking a stand based on their religious beliefs. Maybe someone who actually pays attention to the news can tell me if this is true. I saw somewhere that Vice President Pence's wife, Karen, has been criticized for teaching at a Christian school. ... I do know that in Canada, hate speech legislation passed in April 2019 has criminalized using the Bible to

condemn anyone's "sexual behavior." It would be far easier to keep our heads down and keep quiet in these times.

Jeremiah was tempted to do that. Even though he felt like it, he did not stop proclaiming God's truth. Today's reading quotes him: *"If I say, 'I will not mention him, or speak any more in his name,' there is in my heart as it were a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I am weary with holding it in, and I cannot"* (v 9). God gave him a task to do, the strength to do it, the promise that He was with Jeremiah, and the promise that in the end he would be delivered from all his enemies.

This gets to the heart of our lives and our purpose. God did not place you, His people, His Church, here on earth to fit in. He speaks a different word than they do—a higher, eternal word that will always prove right. It's right not only because it's true but because its purpose is to save the world from its sin. If you love your children, spouse, friends, parents, and even your enemies, you will want them to hear and know this truth.

The Lord loves His children, and that's why this word has been proclaimed in every generation. He will not let it die. He will not let it go unheard. He will not allow it to return to Him empty without accomplishing the purpose for which it is sent.

This doesn't mean that we'll escape the wrath of evil people. But, like Jeremiah, we bear their scorn knowing that our Lord is with us, and that in the end, He will deliver us from all evil and into His eternal kingdom.

We have been deceived if we believe we are on earth to be comfortable and enjoy life. That's part of the promise of heaven, not earth.

In Luther's Small Catechism it says this about the Seventh Petition (But deliver us from evil.) "We pray in this petition, in summary, that our Father in heaven would rescue us from every evil of body and soul, possessions and reputation, and finally, when our last hour comes, give us a blessed end, and graciously take us from this valley of sorrow to Himself in heaven."

While still on this earth we proclaim Jesus Christ and Him crucified for the forgiveness of sins. We proclaim it to ourselves first, because sinners aren't just out there somewhere. We too have failed to live according to God's commands.

That's why we're here this morning. The church is where God is present delivering His gifts of forgiveness and peace earned for us through Christ's death and resurrection. It is here, gathered around God's word, that we hear of His love for us through His Son, Jesus. We hear that His love for us is so great that He sent Jesus to live obediently under the Law, then die on the cross to pay the price for our sin. It is here that Jesus delivers the forgiveness of sins to you in the words of holy absolution. It is here that you feast on His body and blood for the forgiveness of your sins.

Our heavenly Father wants there to be no doubt about it -- your sins are forgiven, and you get to share the message of His love and forgiveness with others. Amen.