

# "The Whole Counsel of God's Word"

Text: Jeremiah 26:1-6

Praise be to God the Father for making known to us his Word and Will; praise be to God the Son for making that Word a message of hope; praise be to God the Holy Spirit for creating in our hearts the faith to believe that message of hope, trusting that Jesus Christ has paid the full price for all of our sins. Amen.

Dear Fellow Christians: There are certain things in life with which mankind really should not experiment. Like child rearing. If you are older than 40 the name Benjamin Spock probably makes you grind your teeth. It was Spock who told an entire generation of parents not to discipline their children, allowing the little terrorists instead to freely express themselves. (*My parents, by the way, didn't think much of "free expression" in little children.*) Discipline, so the good doctor announced to the world, would warp a child's fragile ego. (*My parents didn't worry much about "fragile egos" either.*) Millions followed this guru of child development and for quite some time he remained unchallenged among child rearing professionals. Before his death, however, Dr. Spock made an amazing discovery. He was wrong. He wrote:

*We have reared a generation of brats. Parents aren't firm enough with their children for fear of losing their love or incurring their resentment. This is a cruel deprivation that we professionals have imposed on mothers and fathers. Of course, we did it with the best of intentions. We didn't realize until it was too late how our know-it-all attitude was undermining the self assurance of parents.*

Translation: "Oooops." The real problem, of course, was that man started doubting the child-rearing manual that God wrote, which taught things like Christ-esteem and neighbor-esteem, rather than self-esteem. In God's Word we find all that we need to know about restraint, honor, service, discipline, and respect, but those things take work, denial, and sacrifice, and human beings routinely have a powerful aversion to such things.

As if tinkering with child rearing wasn't bad enough, a far worse experiment started to unravel not long ago in the evangelical community: entertainment-based mega churches began to crumble. While we certainly don't wish evil on any church where God's Word is proclaimed, the problem was, is, that not all of God's Word is being proclaimed. One of the early pioneers in this experiment, Willow Creek's Bill Hybels, wrote:

*We made a mistake. What we should have done when people crossed the line of faith and became Christians, we should have started telling people and teaching people that they have to take responsibility to become 'self feeders.' We should have gotten people, taught people, how to read their bible between services, how to do the spiritual practices much more aggressively on their own.*

"Oooops!" hardly covers it. Dr. Spock's "mistake" was no minor error, but the error of the "church as entertainer movement" is absolutely catastrophic in its scope. The damage of this sort of experimentation cannot be easily undone. Souls are deceived, disillusioned, and destroyed. The problem, at its core, is that man always believes there is something better than the whole counsel of that beautiful, simple Word of God. All such experiments fail, and do great damage to countless souls in the process.

Our text for this morning drives home this truth with unmistakable clarity. We find these words of God the Holy Spirit recorded through the Prophet Jeremiah in the 26<sup>th</sup> Chapter of his Book:

**ESV (Jeremiah 26:1-6) *In the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, this word came from the LORD: <sup>2</sup> "Thus says the LORD: Stand in the court of the LORD's house, and speak to all the cities of Judah that come to worship in the house of the LORD all the words that I command you to speak to them; do not hold back a word. <sup>3</sup> It may be they will listen, and every one turn from his evil way, that I may relent of the disaster that I intend to do to them because of their evil deeds. <sup>4</sup> You shall say to them, 'Thus says the LORD: If you will not listen to me, to walk in my law that I have set before you, <sup>5</sup> and to listen to the words of my servants the prophets whom I send to you urgently, though you have not listened, <sup>6</sup> then I will make this house like Shiloh, and I will make this city a curse for all the nations of the earth.'"***

These are the Words of God. In these words are life and peace, for in these words are law and gospel. That we too might share in these blessings so we pray, **"Sanctify us by Your truth, O Lord. Your word is truth!"** Amen.

True courage takes many different shapes and forms, many of which are not widely recognized or acknowledged in our society. We tend to associate courage with braving enemy gunfire or rushing into a

burning building to save another human being. There is another kind of bravery that, though really much more relevant to our lives today, is seldom acknowledged. It is the courage not so much of body, but of soul; courage not so much in the face of physical harm as it is in the face of emotional and mental anguish. It is the courage to walk and talk in the ways of our God without sidestepping the difficult situations as they confront us. It is the courage to live and speak *the whole counsel of God's Word* in an increasingly Godless society – a world that despises so much of what God has said.

In our text for this morning the Prophet Jeremiah actually exhibited *both* kinds of courage. It's easy to forget that the Apostles and Prophets of old were also human beings like you and me, and that they battled the same fears and uncertainties that afflict us. Jeremiah was sent by God to bring bad news to the Children of Israel. There is little doubt that he, like us, would much rather have softened the blows he was told to lay upon the rebellious nation of Judah. I have known no human being who enjoyed confrontation or relished the thought of speaking unpopular truths – especially when faced with the real possibility of physical retribution. Rare is the man who enjoys speaking words that make others hate and despise him. Jeremiah was probably no different. He also knew full well that prophets who spoke against Jerusalem and her inhabitants did not have much of a life expectancy. We begin to see the true and rare courage Jeremiah exhibited.

Evidence of this man's courage is revealed in the verses following our text. We read there that after he finished speaking the words of our text, a mob of priests, prophets, and laymen flew into a rage and surrounded Jeremiah in the temple, demanding his death. (Note: This would not have been the first time a prophet was killed for speaking the truth as God had commanded. Beginning in verse 20 we are told of a prophet named Uriah who fled for his life to Egypt after repeating the Lord's message to this same King Jehoiakim. Jehoiakim sent men all the way to Egypt to hunt him down and bring him back to Jerusalem. The man was then hacked to death with a sword and his body unceremoniously dumped into a common grave.)

The danger was therefore well known to Jeremiah. The courage he showed was truly a gift from his God. In fact it may well have been the *physical* danger that served to demonstrate to Jeremiah the importance of his *spiritual* message, together with the importance of the precision of that message. The life and death *physical* danger proved the *spiritual* danger that made his message so important, so critical. It made the necessity of bringing God's Word to the hearts of man much more real,

much more vital. We face no such physical danger today, which is why it's so easy to dismiss the necessity of bringing the whole counsel of God's Word to bear in our lives, and in the lives of our neighbor. Certainly history bears this out, for the Christian Church has never done well during the good times. The Church has, conversely, flourished in times of greatest persecution and hardship. A wise old seminary professor was well known among his students for his maxim: "*The greatest danger to the Church is prosperity.*" Hear these words with your heart as well as with your ears and mind, for we indeed live in times of great prosperity.

Knowing full well that as a frail human being Jeremiah might be tempted to tone down the harsh message of condemnation (while enhancing the loving message of hope he had also been instructed to bring to Judah) God gave Jeremiah the words that also need to penetrate our hearts this morning. **"Thus says the LORD: Stand in the court of the LORD's house, and speak to all the cities of Judah that come to worship in the house of the LORD all the words that I command you to speak to them; do not hold back a word."** There was both love and justice in this command to Jeremiah. God told Jeremiah not to hold back or diminish a word because the power to turn and save was carried by that Word of God. When mankind tries to improve that Word of God by tinkering with it, he diminishes it; he makes it something less than it was before. God knows full well the most effective means to save souls. He knows that his words alone are pure, true, and powerful. His words alone are able to turn a man from death to life. That is the love we see in God's command to **"not hold back a word."** That means don't add anything. It means don't leave anything out. It means don't change anything. In his Word God has given us the absolute best tool to call his children back from unbelief and eternal death. His words of love in our text bear this out: **"It may be they will listen, and every one turn from his evil way, that I may relent of the disaster that I intend to do to them because of their evil deeds."** That is what God wanted for the Children of Israel. That is what God wants for all mankind, then and now. God wants all men to turn and be saved. God therefore demonstrates his deep love for mankind when he says: *Bring them my Words, all of my Words.*

So far so good; but if the Word of God is so powerful, why didn't the people of Jerusalem repent? Why aren't the nations today turning in repentance, as did the citizens of ancient Nineveh when they heard the words of the Prophet Jonah? Know with certainty that the problem isn't the Word. The first and greatest problem is that souls

today are not hearing "the words of the Prophet Jonah." They are hearing neither God's Law nor his Gospel, because God's messengers have changed the message. God's Word apparently is just not good enough the way it came from the Manufacturer. Man is intent upon remaking it – adding and subtracting in a futile effort to somehow make it better, or at least more suited to today's ideas and opinions. This in spite of the fact that God specifically repeated to each one of us the command given to Jeremiah long before in the Old Testament. To the New Testament Church, just before he left us for the glory of heaven, he said, **"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me."**<sup>19</sup> ***Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,***<sup>20</sup> ***teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.***" (Matthew 28:18-20)

This is God's message to you and me today. Unfortunately, our natural inclination is to diminish both parts of the message God commanded us to speak – his law and his gospel. Our society does not tolerate the law in its full severity, and therefore sees no need for the gospel in its full, unconditional sweetness. Most decide to mix the two, and in the process they destroy both. The world's philosophy is that everyone should try to be good and to do good, and good will certainly be your reward. If you at least try to be good, God will accept you. What a damning lie this truly is – a continually failing experiment of the very worst sort. Mankind would dearly love to believe that good guys go to heaven (and to define or pattern "good" by what they see in the mirror). That's not the message God told us to bring to the world. The fact is hell will be full of "good guys." The key is *faith in Jesus Christ*. **"God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life."** Note that there is nothing there about "being good." Faith in Jesus saves. Unbelief (denying Jesus as the only source of true goodness) damns.

The world will never understand the love involved in crushing a sinner with God's Holy Law. They will never be able to understand how the human heart must first be made to acknowledge sin, and then to utterly despair of ever being able to fix its own sin problem. Only then can eternal death give way to eternal life. Only then can a soul be rescued from the eternal terror of hell and carried to the waiting arms of our loving Savior. This is what God wanted for his chosen people in Jeremiah's day. This is what he wants today for you and me. Think of it! Contemplate in your mind and heart the love that God has for you. He does not desire your death; he yearns for your eternal life. He does want you to be happy here on this earth, but never at the expense of the

eternal joys of heaven. He wants your joy – both now and later – to be true, real, and genuine. The joy and comfort of those who have not acknowledged and repented of their sin, and who do not believe in Jesus Christ as their one and only Savior from that sin, such joy and comfort on the part of the unbeliever is a myth, a wisp. It is a hollow and deceptive sentence of death on all who accept the lie. God our Savior wants more for you, so much more. Hear again the love in God's words in our text when he says, ***"It may be they will listen, and every one turn from his evil way, that I may relent of the disaster that I intend to do to them because of their evil deeds."*** Hear in these words your loving God calling you away from sin and death, and to eternal life in his Son, Jesus Christ.

You and I have been given the same message, the same grace, that saved those saints who have gone before. We acknowledge with great thanksgiving that fact on this All Saints Sunday. We have been given to know that salvation comes only as a free, unearned gift from God through faith in Jesus Christ. Everyone who believes that Jesus Christ paid for his sins when he offered his sinless life on the cross *will be saved*. When you share that simple truth with the souls in your life, do nothing to dilute or alter God's Word. Serve it as God prepared it. Share the full counsel of God's Word – both law and gospel. Know that great courage will be required, for against this pure, uncut Word the devil and the sinful world will always rage. Great courage, however, is offered by our God, free for the asking. God grant that each of us might so bring to bear the full counsel of God's Word, to the eternal good of dying souls and to the glory of our merciful God. Amen.

## Scripture Readings

<sup>ESV</sup>**(2 Thessalonians 1:5-10)** This is evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are also suffering--<sup>6</sup> since indeed God considers it just to repay with affliction those who afflict you,<sup>7</sup> and to grant relief to you who are afflicted as well as to us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels<sup>8</sup> in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.<sup>9</sup> They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might,<sup>10</sup> when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at among all who have believed, because our testimony to you was believed.

**ESV(Luke 19:11-27)** As they heard these things, he proceeded to tell a parable, because he was near to Jerusalem, and because they supposed that the kingdom of God was to appear immediately. <sup>12</sup> He said therefore, "A nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and then return. <sup>13</sup> Calling ten of his servants, he gave them ten minas, and said to them, 'Engage in business until I come.' <sup>14</sup> But his citizens hated him and sent a delegation after him, saying, 'We do not want this man to reign over us.' <sup>15</sup> When he returned, having received the kingdom, he ordered these servants to whom he had given the money to be called to him, that he might know what they had gained by doing business. <sup>16</sup> The first came before him, saying, 'Lord, your mina has made ten minas more.' <sup>17</sup> And he said to him, 'Well done, good servant! Because you have been faithful in a very little, you shall have authority over ten cities.' <sup>18</sup> And the second came, saying, 'Lord, your mina has made five minas.' <sup>19</sup> And he said to him, 'And you are to be over five cities.' <sup>20</sup> Then another came, saying, 'Lord, here is your mina, which I kept laid away in a handkerchief; <sup>21</sup> for I was afraid of you, because you are a severe man. You take what you did not deposit, and reap what you did not sow.' <sup>22</sup> He said to him, 'I will condemn you with your own words, you wicked servant! You knew that I was a severe man, taking what I did not deposit and reaping what I did not sow? <sup>23</sup> Why then did you not put my money in the bank, and at my coming I might have collected it with interest?' <sup>24</sup> And he said to those who stood by, 'Take the mina from him, and give it to the one who has the ten minas.' <sup>25</sup> And they said to him, 'Lord, he has ten minas!' <sup>26</sup> 'I tell you that to everyone who has, more will be given, but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. <sup>27</sup> But as for these enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, bring them here and slaughter them before me.'"

# ST. PAUL EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

2510 E. Divide Ave. Bismarck, ND 58501

Parsonage and Office: (701) 223-4885 Cell: (701) 425-5483

Website: [www.bismarcklutheran.org](http://www.bismarcklutheran.org)

Mark Johnson, President Angela Pfennig, Organist

Michael Roehl, Pastor

All Saints / 21<sup>st</sup> Sunday after Pentecost – Nov. 3, 2019

## The Opening Prayer by the Pastor

## The Opening Hymn – 604 (Red Hymnal)

"Great God What do I See and Hear"

## The Order of Service – Supplement page 12ff. (Brown Hymnal)

## The Scripture Lessons: (Printed on the back page of this bulletin)

**The First Lesson:** (2 Thessalonians 1:5-10) Because of the old Adam in us, we need to be reminded that the reality of hell for all unbelievers is just as certain as the reality of heaven for all who believe in Jesus Christ. So our first lesson reminds us to soberly reflect also on such truths as we approach the end of another Church Year. Heaven for believers and hell for unbelievers is part of the whole counsel of God's Word that we are called to share with all, beginning with our own families.

## The Psalm of the Day – Psalm 85 (Page 40)

**The Second Lesson:** (Luke 19:11-27) In teaching us the Parable of the Talents, Jesus here reminds us not only that we are all to use the Word of God to carry out His Great Commission, we are also here reminded that God is not mocked. There will indeed be a final judgment against all unbelief. Both law and gospel are necessary for effective outreach – that as many as possible might be saved. It was this same law and gospel that created and sustained all the saints who have been carried home to await the resurrection of the dead and the final judgment.

## The Confession of Faith -

The Apostolic Creed (Brown Hymnal page 15)

## The Pre-Sermon Hymn – 465 (Red Hymnal)

"Christ Is Our Cornerstone"

## The Sermon – Text: Jeremiah 26:1-6 (Printed on the back page of this bulletin)

**"The Full Counsel of God's Word"**

## The Offertory – (Supplement page 16 insert)

## The Post Sermon Hymn – 463 (1-2,6-7) (Red Hymnal)

"For All the Saints Who from Their Labors Rest"

## The Prayers

## The Benediction

## The Closing Hymn – 466 (Stanzas 1 & 4) (Red Hymnal)

"Christ, Thou Art the Sure Foundation"

## Silent Prayer

**Welcome!** - We warmly welcome any visitors who might be with us this morning and invite you to join us every Sunday at this time. St. Paul is a congregation in fellowship with the Church of the Lutheran Confession (CLC) – a conservative Lutheran synod with churches and missions throughout the United States, as well as Canada, India, and Africa. We are glad you are here. Thank you for letting us share the Word of God with you. Please record your visit in our Guest Book, and come again!

## Attendance – Sunday (27) Average (40)

### This Week at St. Paul:

#### Today

-9:00 a.m.

– Sunday School and Bible Class

-10:00 a.m.

– Worship Service

-11:00 a.m.

– Fellowship and coffee hour

-11:15 a.m.

– Church Council Meeting

#### Wednesday

-6:00 p.m.

– Confirmation Class

-7:00 p.m.

– Midweek Bible Class

#### Next Sunday

-9:00 a.m.

– Sunday School and Bible Class

-10:00 a.m.

– Worship Service w/Holy Communion

-11:15 a.m.

– Fellowship and coffee hour

## CLC News – Pastor Michael Eichstadt is considering the call to ILC.

Pastor Andrew Schaller is considering the call to serve as third foreign missionary. Bethel of Morris has called Pastor Terrel Kesterson. Mark Bohde, former CLC pastor and missionary to Thailand, has rejoined the CLC as a member of St. Matthew's in Dallas.

## Houston Area Services – Following the dissolution of Bethel

Congregation, the remaining CLC members in the Houston area have taken the first steps in reorganizing. They plan to meet each Sunday at 5:30pm in a rented facility in the north Houston suburb of Conroe, TX. The group will be served on a rotating basis by Pastor Matt Hanel, Pastor Sam Naumann, and Pastor Emeritus David Baker. For more information, including service location, please see Pastor Roehl.

## Church Council Meeting – The Church Council is scheduled to meet this morning during the fellowship hour. Please bring any agenda items to the attention of a Council member prior to the meeting.

## Annual Church Christmas Party – The Annual Church Christmas Party is scheduled for Saturday, December 7. For planning purposes, please announce your plans to attend by signing the sheet on the mailbox table.