

Lent Devotional April 10, 2025

Scripture

Jeremiah 26:1-16

1 At the beginning of the reign of King Jehoiakim son of Josiah of Judah, this word came from the Lord: 2 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; speak to them all the words that I command you; do not hold back a word. 3 It may be that they will listen, all of them, and will turn from their evil way, that I may change my mind about the disaster that I intend to bring on them because of their evil doings. 4 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, 5 and to heed the words of my servants the prophets whom I send to you urgently—though you have not heeded— 6 then I will make this house like Shiloh, and I will make this city a curse for all the nations of the earth.

7 The priests and the prophets and all the people heard Jeremiah speaking these words in the house of the Lord. 8 And when Jeremiah had finished speaking all that the Lord had commanded him to speak to all the people, then the priests and the prophets and all the people laid hold of him, saying, "You shall die! 9 Why have you prophesied in the name of the Lord, saying, 'This house shall be like Shiloh, and this city shall be desolate, without inhabitant'?" And all the people gathered around Jeremiah in the house of the Lord.

10 When the officials of Judah heard these things, they came up from the king's house to the house of the Lord and took their seat in the entry of the New Gate of the house of the Lord. 11 Then the priests and the prophets said to the officials and to all the people, "This man deserves the sentence of death because he has prophesied against this city, as you have heard with your own ears."

12 Then Jeremiah spoke to all the officials and all the people, saying, "It is the Lord who sent me to prophesy against this house and this city all the words you have heard. 13 Now therefore amend your ways and your doings, and obey the voice of the Lord your God, and the Lord will change his mind about the disaster that he has pronounced against you. 14 But as for me, here I am in your hands. Do with me as seems good and right to you. 15 Only know for certain that if you put me to death, you will be bringing innocent blood upon yourselves and upon this city and its inhabitants, for in truth the Lord sent me to you to speak all these words in your ears."

16 Then the officials and all the people said to the priests and the prophets, "This man does not deserve the sentence of death, for he has spoken to us in the name of the Lord our God."

Devotion

The Rev. Dr. Andy Bossardet '23

"The truth will set you free, but not until it is finished with you." – David Foster Wallace

It is a difficult thing to accept the truth. The road to acceptance may lead through denial, but denial is a tough terrain to cross. In Jeremiah 26, the prophet laments over the state of Jerusalem and pleads for repentance. However, verse seven states that "the priests, the prophets, and all the people" rose up against Jeremiah's words and condemned the audacity with which he spoke against the status quo. The bad news about Judea was rejected by everyone.

For the initial readers of Jeremiah, those living after the exile, Jeremiah 26 is a stirring reminder of the power of denial. They lived in the aftermath of Jeremiah's original audience and of those people's

rejection of Jeremiah's words. This passage reminded them how easy it is to ignore one's faults. The chapter served—and serves—as a warning to future generations that we ignore our sins to our own peril.

However, Jeremiah 26 also gives us reason for hope. The prophet is clear: if you are willing to heed the truth and allow God to transform you, the default future of exile and pain is avoidable. For us today, telling the truth about our sin can open us to the life-transforming power of the Holy Spirit. Sin thrives in secrecy and shame. Sin cannot survive the intense and blinding light of the truth.

May Jeremiah's words stir in you as well. May they remind you that the purpose of self-awareness is not to drag us down but to release us from the burdens which have already dragged us down. May they remind you that the sting of recognizing our sin can also be the key to finding our freedom.

Prayer

Creator God,

Shine the light of truth in the corners of our hearts. Illuminate the parts of ourselves which we would rather not be seen. May they be held in the gracious love and compassion of your Spirit. May we let the truth do its work in us, that we might be changed into people who can increasingly love you and our neighbor. In the name of the crucified and risen Jesus,

Amen.