

“The Messenger” – Pr Jim Sprengle – Lent 2 – March 13, 2022

- I. **Jeremiah 26:15** – “Only know for certain that if you put me to death, you will bring 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.”
- II. **October 16–28, 1962.**
 - a. I suppose most people can’t immediately recall these dates, or how important they were in history.
 - b. For 13 days, the entire world was on high alert that a nuclear war could start at any moment... with a last-minute deal that averted disaster.
 - c. It was the Cuban Missile Crisis.
 - i. Some of you will personally recall when the old Soviet Union helped develop missile sites in Cuba, with the intention of fully nuclearizing.
 - ii. Of course, Cuba being 90 miles off Florida, this was a threat the United States could not allow.
 - iii. The U.S. set up a “quarantine,” as they put it, with our navy blocking any shipments of missiles.
 - iv. President Kennedy prepared the country with the highest level alert before war began, warning that nuclear missiles could be launched into major cities at any time.
 - v. A U.S. spy plane was then shot down over Cuba, and American forces were ready for a full-scale invasion of Cuba.
 - vi. Our Secretary of Defense at the time said, “I thought it was the last Saturday I would ever see.”
 - vii. However, after several days of sometimes harsh words between Kennedy and the Soviet leader, Khrushchev – the Soviets turned around and went home.
 - viii. No nuclear bombs were unleashed on the world, and a massive crisis was averted.
- III. **Our prophet Jeremiah is preaching to a nation facing disaster.**
 - a. You might say that he also had some “harsh” words for the people in the southern kingdom of Judah and the city of Jerusalem as they were continuing to walk away from God.
 - b. As Jeremiah preaches about God’s wrath, a person without any knowledge of the outcome might be wondering – “Will the people repent and avert the coming crisis?”
 - c. It’s also a question for us today – because whether we realize it or not, a crisis bigger than any nuclear disaster is right at our doorstep.
 - i. The crisis is our eternal salvation... and whether we have faith in Christ as our Savior – or whether we despise and reject Him.
 - ii. And don’t forget, the preaching of God’s Word can also be despised and rejected – which means we are rejecting God Himself.

- d. Preaching God's Word was Jeremiah's job, as he called out for the people to turn from their sins and rejection of God by worshiping idols and false gods.
- e. We are learning a lot about the trouble facing God's people in our Bible studies over the past several months.
 - i. Starting in 1 Samuel, Israel chose to have a king rule over them (1 Samuel 8), which God warned them would not be the best... but they wanted to do what the other nations did.
 - ii. So King Saul was chosen, then after him was King David, and then his son, Solomon.
 - 1. The kingdom split after Solomon, and the northern part of Israel was wiped out by a foreign invasion (which is in our Bible study today of 2 Kings chapter 17)
 - 2. However, the southern kingdom of Judah, where Jerusalem and the temple were, remained intact for awhile longer.
 - 3. The problem was that the people had a false sense of security that they were going to be fine because the temple was God's presence on earth – and they were a favored people.
 - 4. In fact, they were using God's temple as a type of good luck charm to keep evil away – rather than turning to God.
- f. So, Jeremiah shares some harsh words... "This house shall be like Shiloh, and this city shall be desolate, without inhabitant" (vs 9)
 - i. Again, we go back to our Bible study in 1 Samuel, the Ark of the Covenant was stored in Shiloh at one time, until the people dragged it out into battle like a good luck charm...
 - 1. The ark ended up being captured by the Philistines, and Shiloh was destroyed.
 - ii. Jeremiah is telling the people of Jerusalem and the southern kingdom of Judah that a crisis is coming unless they repent – unless they put the false gods away and come back home to the one true God.
- g. Here's the thing... not only were those people in Judah facing a physical destruction of their cities, their homes, and the temple... they were facing the destruction of their eternal souls!

IV. **Jeremiah calls the people to reject their idols and turn to God.**

- a. What happens to the messenger?
 - i. The leaders and people are ready to put him to death...
 - ii. Of course, these are the false prophets and priests who don't want to see their power slipping away.
- b. But again, what message from God does Jeremiah preach?
 - i. He said that God, Yahweh, sent him to speak these words...and if they repent, God will relent... if they don't, disaster awaits.
 - ii. And then he says if they decide to kill him for that... whatever – the blood of an innocent man will be on their heads.

- c. At that point in time, the people of Judah have a chance to avert a crisis.
- V. **We all face the same call to repentance.**
 - a. We might scoff at those silly Israelites for worshiping idols made of stone or wood... but our idols are just same.
 - i. We might not offer sacrifices in the high places, but we worship and trust in things around us... cars, sports...careers, money, medicine... we even plan these things in place of worshiping God in church.
 - b. We don't like hearing the preacher call out the sins of our lives or the world.
 - i. We get bent out of shape when God's own Word is preached to call us into being set apart from the rest of the world...
 - ii. Rather than just accepting the sin and brokenness around us – or in us – we should be rejecting it and repenting.
 - c. Fortunately, you haven't tried to kill me or put me in jail – but I've always said, "Don't kill the messenger."
 - d. ...and the message is God's Word and His call to come back home to Him.
- VI. **Only one thing can avert this crisis...**
 - a. Jesus, God's own Son who died bringing us a message of salvation.
 - b. When Jeremiah was dragged before the leaders, threatened with death, and even proclaimed his innocence... didn't that sound familiar?
 - i. Jesus was also accosted by the religious leaders of the day – beat up and accused of all kinds of false charges... and in the end, sentenced to death by crucifixion.
 - c. Remember what God the Father said at the Transfiguration... "This is My Son, My chosen one; listen to Him." (Luke 9:35)
 - i. And yet, even in today's Gospel, Jesus cries over a people who ignored and killed the prophets calling them to repentance. (Lk 13:34)
 - ii. Even after sending all of them, God decides to send His own Son to get them to listen – but they killed Him just like the rest.
 - d. This was the only way the crisis could be averted – God Himself came in the flesh to take our punishment.
 - i. Hear these words as if for the first time: "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son... For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through Him" (Jn 3:16–17).
 - e. Sadly, the people of Judah did not listen to God, and all the words of prophet came true...
 - i. They are an example of rejecting the preaching and teaching of the Word – but we don't have to make the same mistake!
 - 1. Return... Come back home to Jesus – the only Truth.
 - f. By grace through faith, God gives us the power to avert a crisis... to listen to Jesus the ultimate Messenger and to respond...

- i. And whenever our hearts return the Lord, whenever our faith calls us home, whenever we place our trust in Jesus, there is no crisis... only peace... Amen.