The sermon was over. Nobody slept during that one! The reluctant preacher finished saying all that he had to say: "Thus says the LORD: Repent. Turn from your evil way. Walk in my Law." They'd heard it before.

So, worshipers at Jerusalem's Temple, what do you think of the preacher? "He's a jerk! He's abrasive and intrusive. He speaks threatening words against the Lord's house, this holy temple, and against this holy city. Get him!"

That's the reception Jeremiah the prophet received in the court of the Lord's house that day: "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!'" (v 8). "Kill the preacher!"

Although this all took place a long time ago in a country far, far way this incident should serve as a wake up call for us here today. Why were these people so ready to kill Jeremiah? Why did they so intensely hate what God's prophet had to say to them? Maybe it's because they were living in chaotic times; uncertain times, and things were falling apart. Afterall, their neighbors to the north were conquered by an invading army (Assyria, 722 BC), and perhaps they can sense their own impending doom. Or maybe they're just sick of Jeremiah. He has preached all this before, (ch 7). And like most people they don't want to hear this "same old, same old" condemnation of their sins. In their case it was their persistent idolatries and false worship.

But the people of Jerusalem ***will*** hear these words of Law again because… the LORD ***loves*** them. That's why He sends a preacher to the temple. Jeremiah isn't speaking on his own accord, He's speaking what the LORD has ordered Him to say: "for in truth," Jeremiah swears, "the ***LORD*** sent me to you to speak all these words in your ears" (v 15). It's the ***LORD's*** doing, then. Jeremiah ***has*** to say this. And the LORD's ***words*** … are the LORD's ***power***. God's words of Law are words that accuse and kill, but His words of Promise are what heals and makes whole.

So, what is it that sets the people off like this? What is it that makes them so angry? The answer: Jeremiah says the word "***Shiloh***" (v 6) 'Why do you say this place will be like Shiloh?' they demand.

In order to discover what's so significant about Shiloh, we have to take a trip back to 1 Samuel chapter 4. Shiloh was the town where the Lord's Tabernacle was located. From the days of Joshua until the days of the little boy Samuel, it was where God dwelt among His people. Soon after little Samuel was given his famous calling by God, Shiloh was devastated by the Philistine army

and the Ark of the Covenant, which was the central location of the Lord's glory dwelling on Earth, was confiscated by the Philistines. What's more Hophni and Phinehas, Eli the Priests' sons were killed. And then at the end of 1 Samuel 4 Hophni's wife has a child. And with her dying breath she names him Ichabod, which means "Where is the glory?" because the ark of God has been captured.

Shiloh had been left desolate. God's glory has left His house of worship. God's glory has departed from among His people.

So, clearly Jeremiah is saying that the Temple of the LORD of the 6th century B.C. is going to become like Shiloh's Tabernacle of the Lord of the 11th century. Desolate. And indeed, the Temple and the city of Jerusalem will become like Shiloh, devastated, ruined, uprooted, and overthrown. In fact, as Jeremiah prophesies, there won't be any inhabitants left.

Then Jeremiah concludes his message as he speaks to all the officials and all the people, saying, "The ***Lord*** sent me to prophesy against this house and this city all the words you have heard. Now therefore mend your ways and your deeds, and obey the voice of the Lord your God, and the Lord will relent of the disaster that he has pronounced against you" (12-13).

So, to recap, God sent Jeremiah to warn the people about the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple which will happen as a result of their sin. But that didn't have to be the final word. If they would confess their sins and turn from their idolatry, it would not be too late: God would forgive them and spare them.

That's what God ***wanted***, but sadly, it's not what the ***people*** wanted. And for Jeremiah's faithful proclamation of God's Word, he is arrested and tried for treason, a crime that carries with it the sentence of death.

In this account from Jeremiah chapter 26, we see so clearly how hard hearts resist every offer of mercy from God and ignore all His warnings of impending judgment. We also see so vividly how God's heart longs to forgive sinners, even when they resist His Word and murder His prophets.

And this can be both a powerful instruction and a great comfort for us today. Know that the same Lord has set His heart on you. Through His Word, the Bible, He continues to call to you and to me today.

During this time of Lent we are especially mindful of God's Law which shows us our sin and our need for a Savior. The Law condemns us and drives us to turn from our sins. Like, the people of Jerusalem, maybe we don't want to hear this "same old, same old" message, but God knows it is precisely what we need to ready us for His Gospel. The promise of the complete forgiveness of sins through faith in the Messiah, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world and gives eternal life to all who trust in Him.

And remember, the LORD's ***words*** … are the LORD's ***power***. "For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. "(Heb. 4:12) God's words of Law are words that accuse and kill. They show us our sin and our need for a Savior, ***our*** need for God's mercy. But His words of promise, His Gospel, are what heals and makes us whole.

As with Jeremiah to the people of Jerusalem in the days of old, God continues to send messengers to call people to turn from their sin today. He wants us to be forgiven and to trust in Christ and His loving sacrifice for us on the cross.

In our Epistle lesson, Paul pleaded with the Philippians not to walk as enemies of the cross of Christ, who are bound for destruction; to not set their minds on earthly things, but heavenly things from which we await the return of our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Through the same Word of God today and through the servants He sends in His name, God calls us too, to turn from our sins and to receive the forgiveness of sins accomplished for us on Christ' s Wondrous cross.

Remember that the people of Jerusalem were confident in their Temple, their city, their status, but they weren't confident in God and His Word spoken to them. They were comfortable in their sins and saw no need to repent of anything.

That was a problem that would continue to plague the people of Jerusalem even up to days of Jesus' ministry. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem," He said "the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not!"

Jesus knew that He too would be rejected like Jeremiah in Jerusalem. He knew that like many other prophets, He too would be put to death in that great city. Nevertheless, He resolutely set out to go to Jerusalem to complete His mission. As He says it in our text that He ***must*** go to Jerusalem. Jesus is determined to go to Jerusalem. Nothing could prevent Him from going to Jerusalem. It is the place where He would fulfill all the Old Testament prophecies of a Redeemer, whose precious blood shed on a wooden, yet wonderous cross would atone for the sins of the whole world, for your sins and mine.

Right after our text from Jeremiah, the officials and all the people came to their senses and said to the priests and the prophets that Jeremiah did not

deserve the sentence of death for speaking in the Lord's name. For the time being Jeremiah's life was spared. Because of their unrepentant sin, however, the inhabitants of Jerusalem ***would*** soon see their city become like Shiloh, desolate.

Thanks be to God that another Preacher arose and came to Jerusalem years later. Thanks be to God that this Preacher, Jesus, Who ***did*** die… for us… also rose and still comes to the Lord's house week after week, with His words of Law and Gospel. Here, He delights to give to you the forgiveness of your sins, strength for your faith, and eternal life for all who trust in His Words of Promise.

Jesus was forsaken on the cross, left desolate—crucified, died, and was buried—but was raised to life on the third day. Jesus is the Preacher for you and for me. He is ***our*** Preacher who ***lives forever!*** Amen!