

Pr. Michael Ewert  
10<sup>th</sup> Sunday After Pentecost  
8/17/25

### A Caution of Words

There was a bar in a small town. The owners of the bar wanted to increase their profits, so they started to add gambling, girls, fights, drugs. You would never find a more wretched hive of scum and villainy. But one day, the local preacher said no more; he stood outside and proclaimed that judgment would be coming. He told the patrons to leave now. The patrons scoffed at him. Judgement? It hasn't come for us yet. God isn't here, preacher, go back to your home. He doesn't care what is happening here. But still day after day, the preacher stood outside warning the people to turn away from this den of sin. Eventually, the owners of the bar grew tired of the old preacher's habits and started paying some of their own people to preach as well. To tell the people the judgment is never going to arrive, God doesn't care. The bar only grew bolder, but there the preacher stood. Until the day when the law arrived. The preacher wept openly as the bar shut down, the patrons incarcerated, the owners thrown behind bars. Judgement had come like a storm. The preacher had tried to warn them, but they preferred the words of their own prophets.

This is the world Jeremiah lived in. Jerusalem and its people had turned away from God and worshipped false idols. Jeremiah warned them of the impending judgement that would be the exile. And yet they would not listen. They had their own prophets who gave them soothing news. "It shall be well with you...No disaster shall fall upon you" They didn't speak with the word of the Lord. And God replies to their lies, "Am I a God at hand...and not a God far away?" These false prophets told many lies, but it all boiled down to one point, God is not near. He does not care about what is going on. Because of the prophets the people and kings were free to act as they pleased. They acted however they pleased. The law was forgotten. God isn't here why should I care?

It seems easy to scoff at these Israelites, how could they forget God and turn away from him? Why don't they listen to Jeremiah? But if we are honest, we are just as bad as those Israelites. How often do we fall for the temptation that the false prophets uttered? I either forget God or I turn away and pretend he is not near. God can't hear my whispers as I gossip about my neighbor. God can't see as I open that webpage, I know I shouldn't enter. God doesn't care as we pour

ourselves into our sports team, and remain empty of his word and prayer. God can't see us as we put all our trust in the latest politician who will let us down and divide the country even further. God can't see, he can't hear, he doesn't care because he isn't near. And Jeremiah declares the judgement against us, "Behold, the storm of the Lord! Wrath has gone forth, a whirling tempest; it will burst upon the head of the wicked." Our sin has brought the wrath of God upon us. The lie of the ancient Israelites is as real as it ever is.

But no matter the age God answers this lie the same way, he draws ever closer to his people. In the beginning of this chapter God says, "Behold I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king." Because the wrath of God is upon us as we ignore God's nearness, God sends his righteous branch to die for us and then rise as reigning king. God drew near to his people in Jesus Christ. The King from the line of David. God himself entered the world for you. Jesus lives perfectly to die as your substitute on the cross to bring you into his loving arms and to say you are mine. You are my child. I see you, I hear you, I care for you. I draw you near to me that you may know my love to its fullest. I forgive you for all the times you ignore me. I clothe you in my righteousness alone.

God also draws near to us today in Word and Sacrament. He tells us where he is, first in baptism as God's name is placed upon you with the water that washes away our sin. Then in communion he says, This is my body, this is my blood given and shed for you. Christ's own body and blood given to us. Finally, he is present in the written and the proclaimed word. In the Bible, you hear God speak today. But God also speaks in absolution. As the Pastor will say in the stead and by the command of my lord Jesus. God himself speaks to you through the pastor. God also speaks in the Sermon as the pastor applies law and Gospel. And through faith we receive God. Jesus enters into you through the holy spirit. Here is God for you. God does care because he sent his son to die for you. God does hear you, he forgives you. God does see you as his own through baptism. And God is near in the Lord's supper as he gives his own body and blood and forgiveness for you. God is near!

And so we return to the story I told at the beginning. We live amid the host of lies telling us that God is far away and he doesn't care. They tell us to ignore God's word. But hear the Prophet Jeremiah again today, God is near and he draws near to us. Through word and sacrament God not

only draws near, but he also strengthens and encourages us. The world's lies distract and pull us away. I ask you to identify one source in your life that repeats the lie that God is not near, is it the tv, your phone, social media? Voices you didn't even realize were leading you astray? Identify the lies to see that God is near. If you don't see the lies it will be harder to see the truth. For Jesus says I am the way the truth and the life. And he promises. I will be with you until the end of the age. God's Word Endures Forever and it speaks here, now, for you.

And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.