

September 3, 2023 – The 14th Sunday after Pentecost
Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Beaver Dam, Wisconsin

Jeremiah 15:15-21

¹⁵ LORD, you understand; remember me and care for me. Avenge me on my persecutors. You are long-suffering—do not take me away; think of how I suffer reproach for your sake. ¹⁶ When your words came, I ate them; they were my joy and my heart's delight, for I bear your name, LORD God Almighty. ¹⁷ I never sat in the company of revelers, never made merry with them; I sat alone because your hand was on me and you had filled me with indignation. ¹⁸ Why is my pain unending and my wound grievous and incurable? You are to me like a deceptive brook, like a spring that fails.

¹⁹ Therefore this is what the LORD says:

“If you repent, I will restore you that you may serve me; if you utter worthy, not worthless, words, you will be my spokesman. Let this people turn to you, but you must not turn to them. ²⁰ I will make you a wall to this people, a fortified wall of bronze; they will fight against you but will not overcome you, for I am with you to rescue and save you,” declares the LORD. ²¹ “I will save you from the hands of the wicked and deliver you from the grasp of the cruel.”

Now may the God of hope fill you with complete joy and peace as you continue to believe, so that you overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. (Romans 15:13)

Do you have drama in your life? I am guessing that everyone does at least to a certain degree. Maybe it depends on each individual. What seems like great drama to one might not seem so great to the next. What kind of drama is it? The neighbors and their irritating habits? Your children? Spouse? Workplace?

The words of Jeremiah in our text this morning reveal that he certainly had to face considerable drama in his ministry. It was a difficult ministry as God's spokesman to that portion of Israel that had not yet been carried into captivity. In the first four verses of our text Jeremiah is letting God know in no uncertain terms about the drama that he was enduring as he answered the Lord's call. In verse 15 he talks about his persecutors and that he has been suffering reproach or disgrace. The people refused to listen to him. The religious leaders accused him of lying because he pointed out their false teaching. The government permitted him to be thrown into a well to silence him. That sure is a lot more drama than I have experienced in my life!

There's more – in verse 17 he says that he sat alone. He was without friends because the pagan society all around him had excluded him. He was filled with indignation, that's anger, at the apostasy or defection from faith of the civil leadership, the clergy and the people. Earlier in this prophecy he summed up the situation with these words: *“The prophets prophesy lies, the priests rule by their own authority, and my people love it this way (Jeremiah 5:31)*

The we come to verse 18 to see Jeremiah reveal his deepest feelings: *“Why is my pain unending and my wound grievous and incurable?”* This pain was probably both physical and mental anguish as he shares God's hurt at the apostasy of his people. His message was a harsh message – “captivity is coming unless you repent and return to serving the one true God.” He is called the Prophet of Doom. Both the message that he had to proclaim and the people's reaction to it brought grief and anguish to

his soul. He no doubt is feeling the pain of the contempt and blame this godless people have heaped on him.

Jeremiah even questions God's support and implies that it is God's fault. The Lord had referred to himself as "the spring of living water." (2:13) Now Jeremiah challenges God by asking him: "Will you be to me like a deceptive brook, like a spring that fails?" (v. 18) The drama was so great in Jeremiah's life that he was ready to challenge the Lord's care of him and even the Lord's faithfulness to his promises.

Does that sound familiar, even just in the slightest? Are you always content with the twists and turns that pop up in your life? Have you ever just thought "Why me?" or "Why him/her and not me?" "Why this illness?" "Why did my loved one die now?" "Lord God are you really listening?" "Are you really in control?"

As we dig a little deeper into Jeremiah's words and hear what the Lord says in response to Jeremiah's complaining and accusing, we see that despite his condition and complaint the Lord God's faithful promises still sustain him and give him hope. That's what we can learn from Jeremiah today from our text. He encourages us to:

TRUST THE PROMISES OF OUR FAITHFUL LORD!

Impressive promises

Gracious promises

Right at the beginning of the text Jeremiah says, "You understand, O Lord; remember me and care for me." (v. 15) Despite all the drama, the rejection, the persecution, the wickedness of the people, and their rejection of the Lord, Jeremiah still hung on to his faithful Lord. He was confident that while he was alone, separated from heathen society, that his greatest friend was still there for him. What amazing words, "You understand." Through his Son, Jesus, God knows and understands what it is like to be persecuted and be alone. He endured all of that for us. He cried out on the cross, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" He has remembered us and gives us the best and greatest care by removing our sin and its guilt and preparing a place for us in heaven. That's impressive and gracious!

He also tells God that he knows God is "long-suffering." Oh how impressive that is – despite our rebellion and lack of trust God is very patient with us and so gracious that he doesn't give us what we deserve, but rescues us from sin, death, and the devil.

Jeremiah found strength and peace in the word of the Lord. He said "When your words came, I ate them: they were my joy and my heart's delight." Jeremiah listened to the words of the Lord. He learned, understood and applied God's Word to himself. The power of God's words and the promises they proclaim were impressive. They still are! When the drama of life seems overwhelming, take time from all the worldly things in your life and "eat" God's word. Through his words God promises that he will lift up your heart and spirit. He will strengthen you so that whatever you must go through in life, you will still remain his child. What an impressive and gracious promise he put in our possession.

The final three verses are filled to overflowing with impressive and gracious promises. Listen to verse 19 again: "If you repent, I will restore you that you may serve me; if you utter worthy, not worthless, words, you will be my spokesman. Let this people turn to you, but you must not turn to them." God wants Jeremiah and us to know and firmly believe that he has removed our sin and guilt through Jesus. He not only restores us daily into his family (This morning in a most marvelous way through Lord's Supper.) but he also strengthens us so that we can serve him with our lives. The Lord highlights

two ways that we can serve him. With worthy words we become his spokespeople. Worthy words are words that speak the impressive and gracious promises of our faithful Lord. That's proclaiming Law and Gospel, pointing out sinfulness and forgiveness through Jesus. We can do this through the strength which the Lord gives. Jeremiah would need that strength for he would become a wall of bronze. Ridicule and persecution would come his way, but he would not be overcome. Despite the devil's temptations to give in, he would remain firm in his faith and the proclamation of the Word of God. That's your strength through all the dramas of life. You too can be a wall of bronze resisting the unworthy words of this world and its wicked ways.

What wonderful peace we receive through the final promise of the Lord: "I will save you from the hands of the wicked and deliver you from the grasp of the cruel."(v.21) Jesus said it this way: "And surely I am with you always to the very end of the age." (Matthew 28:20)

When drama comes our way, we don't have to be surprised. We live in a sinful world and we have our sinful natures. It seems to me that our society and times are becoming more and more like the times of Jeremiah. Fewer and fewer people are willing to listen to the Lord and his will for our lives. So it becomes very important to know and **trust the promises of our faithful Lord**. His promises to you are impressive and gracious. Amen.

Joel Jaeger