

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church  
Quincy, IL  
Rev. Martin Eden

Pentecost 4  
Saturday, June 24, 2023, at 5:00 p.m.  
Sunday, June 25, 2023, at 9:00 a.m.

# “God Does Not Deceive”

Jeremiah 20:7-13

June 25<sup>th</sup> is a special day for all Lutherans, but particularly for me. June 25, 1995, was the day of my ordination. I was speaking with Matt Riley on Tuesday about his upcoming ordination date which we will share, as he is being ordained this weekend at St. James.

I told him that the passage from Jeremiah is so appropriate as we ponder ordination vows: “O Lord, you have deceived me, and I was deceived.” Those words need some clarification.

So we ask the question, “What does this mean?” When you dig into the root word, you see that this is the same word used when Delilah deceives Samson and entices him into telling the secret of his great strength. But it does not always, or even generally mean something sinister.

The Lord persuaded Jeremiah to take up the mantle as a prophet of God and Jeremiah’s ministry probably ended up being not quite what he thought he was signing up for. Jeremiah is basically saying, “I was gullible, and you got me.” Jeremiah was a teenager when God called him and touched him on his lips and said, “Behold, I have put My words into your mouth.”

God did not lie to Jeremiah. God did not “deceive” him with false promises. God just didn’t tell him what the next 40 years of ministry was going to look like. Jeremiah’s job was to speak out and say very unpopular things. His job was to go

to the kings of Judah and tell them that violence and destruction is coming, and that they should just surrender to the Babylonians. And he was mocked and laughed at and the people to whom God was sending him did not want to listen to him.

I will be completely honest that my ministry has not been fraught with peril or any real turmoil – and thanks be to God. As I said when you blessed me with an acknowledgement of my 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of my ordination, I give thanks for the opportunity to serve here at Our Redeemer every time I step into the pulpit. And I pray Matt Riley will be blessed with the peaceful years I have had.

For me, rather than looking at my ministry, the obvious connection for today concerning the words of Jeremiah is what happened on June 25 in the year 1530. June 25 is the anniversary of the Presentation of the Augsburg Confession. In the year 1530, Luther's protégé Philip Melanchthon put together 28 articles of faith which were presented to the Emperor at the Diet of Augsburg. Luther could not attend because he was declared an outlaw and would be captured or killed.

The princes and other leaders who signed the Augsburg Confession arrived at great personal risk. The Emperor told them that the Lutheran preachers were not allowed to preach and that all of those present were going to join him that week in worshiping "in the Roman manner." George Margrave of Brandenburg (that is, the prince/duke of Brandenburg) walked up nearer to the Emperor said, "before I would allow anyone to take from me the Word of God and ask me to deny my God, I will kneel and let him strike off my head!" And he knelt down and bowed his head.

The Emperor is shocked and surprised. He had most likely assumed that these princes from northern Germany were playing politics and using the fact that the Ottoman Turks (the Muslim army) was approaching the gates of Vienna,

Austria. He thought they were just taking the opportunity to carve out a little more power for themselves, as politicians would typically do.

And George of Brandenburg let Emperor Charles see in no uncertain terms that this is about faith. This is about the Word of God being more important to me than my own head. This display of faith, this bold witness of the Gospel caused the Emperor to respond without using his interpreter in whatever broken German he knew and said, “No Prince, no head! No head!

Emperor Charles did not want to fight. He wanted a political compromise. He needed those princes. George of Brandenburg bore witness that this is the more important fight. This is a fight for truth. The truth of the cross of Jesus Christ and what He has done for you is worth fighting for. The Word of God is worth fighting for. It is of more value to George of Brandenburg than his own head.

We look at Jeremiah. We look at men like George of Brandenburg. We need to look in the mirror. In Baptism, God has called you out of your old life into something completely different. The faith created in Baptism is worth celebrating, but it is something that we all too often take for granted. At your Baptism, you were probably dressed in fancy clothes; there was probably even a cake shared by friends and family.

But becoming a theologian of the cross, living under the cross of Jesus Christ is not a life of fancy clothes and cake. There are no false promises given in Baptism. You have not been deceived, but you have been persuaded into a life which requires you to believe and confess unpopular things. We are mocked throughout all forms of the media. We are laughed at for acknowledging God as the Author of life. As St. Paul says, the world around us thinks of the cross as foolishness.

Be thankful that we still live in a society where we are not forced to make a public confession that Christ and the Word of God are of more value than your head. You go to certain regions of Africa and you see there are Christians who do not have that luxury.

We are simply mocked and scoffed at. How do we protect ourselves from the mocking and scoffing? We don't. We read in Matthew's Gospel, Jesus says, "So everyone who acknowledges Me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven, but whoever denies Me before men, I also will deny before My Father who is in heaven."

Part of our calling as baptized children of God is to acknowledge and confess our faith in God publicly. There is no such thing as being a "secret Christian." "Whoever denies Me before men, I will deny before My Father in heaven." You do not want that for yourself. And you do not want to be silent around others who do not share the joy which we have. That's not good for them.

Jeremiah found that, when he tried to just keep quiet and let the people go their own way down the path to destruction, the Word of the Lord was like a fire burning within him. He could not be silent. The Word of God must be proclaimed. It is like when the Pharisees told Jesus to silence His apostles. Jesus said, "If they were silent, then even the rocks would cry out."

The Word of the Lord must be proclaimed. "What you hear whispered, proclaim on the housetops." And "before I would allow anyone to take from me the Word of God and ask me to deny my God, I will kneel and let him strike off my head!" Amen.