

It's a tough job, but someone has to do it. This phrase is often used in our society in a very sarcastic tone. It is usually spoken to get a laugh by someone that seems to have the perfect job, the male beauty pageant judge or someone like that. However, as I read about Jeremiah's life and his prophesies this week, I began to doubt that the prophet Jeremiah would have even chuckled a bit at such a phrase. You see, this phrase is all too apt of description of Jeremiah's life. His was a tough job indeed, and at times Jeremiah regretted that he was the one to have to do it. Jeremiah was sent to prophesy to the nation of Judah about their sinful ways. He was sent to tell Judah that they were about to be carried off into exile in Babylon. He was blessed to speak a few words of hope, but overwhelming his message was one of death and destruction. Worse yet, it was to his friends, his family, his people, that he had been called to speak these words of rebuke. Jeremiahs had to tell them that the Promised Land was about to become the plundered land. Peace was about to give way to pestilence. The people had refused God's many calls to repentance and would now suffer the consequences of cheating on a jealous God.

Jeremiah was admittedly reluctant prophet at times. He records that at times he didn't want to speak the words that the Lord had given him. They were harsh words, not easy ones to speak to your own people. Yet as Jeremiah said when he tried to keep silent the words burned within him. God's word was so strong that it forced its speaking even when Jeremiah's will was not totally in line with Gods. Oh, Jeremiah knew that all those words and more were deserved to a nation that had forsaken the God that had brought them out of Egypt and chased after other gods. He just also knew that bringing to these rebellious people such a message might get him killed in the process. He says in our text he was like a gentle sheep being lead to the slaughter as he delivered these words. He was one man speaking to his own people with the hope that they might just listen and repent. But instead Jeremiah's very own people, from his own hometown,

were out to kill him instead. They decided that they would rid of him before he could speak one more word of judgment. Jeremiah was vexed from every side, even from those closest to him. He received mockery, malicious words, and threats of murder. But God had a message for Jeremiah. He told Jeremiah that indeed those that speak God's word will be vexed by the world, but they also will be vindicated by Him. Yes for their evil actions, the men of Anathoth, Jeremiah's hometown, were about to receive punishment from God. And receive punishment they did. Not a one of them was spared. But Jeremiah's life was spared. He was vindicated. By his life being preserved, it was shown that Jeremiah's words were true and his people's actions were indeed evil.

Jeremiah was not alone in his life story. Most of the prophets throughout time knew well what Jeremiah went through. They knew what it was to be vexed by the world, yet vindicated by God. However, no one, not even Jeremiah himself knew this truth as our Lord Jesus knew it. Jesus came not only speaking truth, but being the very essence of truth himself. He walked around doing absolutely everything perfectly. And yet, he was the ultimate lamb led to the slaughter as our sermon hymn reminded us today. He was plotted against his entire life. The Pharisees were always lurking around the corner to find some reason to rid themselves of Jesus. And when they got sick of searching for a mistake that Jesus might make, they went instead for the heart of the truth that Jesus taught, namely that He was God almighty in the flesh having come down to earth to save all men and women from their sins. The Pharisees cried blasphemy and rallied a crowd together to support their charges. Although their prosecution of Jesus was shady at best before the chief priests, Pilate, and Herod, Jesus was sentenced to be crucified. Just like Jeremiah and many prophets before him, it was Jesus own people who said that he must die for his words of truth.

Jeremiah was vindicated by seeing his enemies being punished while he lived. Jesus was not so lucky. Rather his enemies drove nails into his hands and feet, and lifted him onto the cross as an example to anyone who would dare speak such truth as Jesus had done. Jesus knew what it was to be vexed. Not only did he receive mockery, malicious words, and threats of murder, he received death itself at the hands of his enemies. On that Friday night, it looked as if for once God's prophet has been vexed to death with no hope of vindication. But then came Sunday. Jesus' words and his very being were proved to be truth as he rose from the grave to proclaim victory over all of God's enemies. Easter morning was the vindication of God in the flesh.

Have you ever been vexed for speaking God's word in its truth? The situation today is not much different than the one in Jeremiah or Jesus' time. As Jesus reminded us last week in our gospel, the one which follows Him is to pick up his cross and follow. When we speak God's word in its truth, people will no doubt plot against us as well. Paul says that we Christians also are like sheep being led to slaughter all day long. Often we avoid such vexation by being quiet or not speaking quite all the truth of God. But if we are truthful to our world, people will revolt against our words just like they did Jeremiah's words and Jesus' words. If we tell our world that they can't just sleep with anyone they want, but that sex must only be expressed within marriage, the revolt will begin with weird stares and works its way into yelling, or even more. When we tell our world that God is jealous and will not accept anyone that chases after other gods, that it is not okay for each person just make up their own religion and set of morals by picking and choosing between all the options, we will be called intolerant. We will have committed perhaps the gravest crime noted in our pluralistic society which teaches that we must accept all truth as equal. We will be looked at as unreasonable. And if we tell people that being concerned only

with the treasures of this world is sin, we will be told to mind our own business. But truthfully, we need not worry about what the world will say. The only thing that we need be worried about is that we speak the truth. If we have not, we go to Jesus for forgiveness and are filled again with his words to speak. We need not be so concerned with what the world thinks of us. For we know that those that are vexed by the world are vindicated by God. As a mighty fortress says, “And take they our life, Goods, fame, child and wife, Let these all be gone, They yet have nothing won; The Kingdom our remaineth.” As we will sing later today, heaven is our home. And even more than our home, it is the place of our vindication. As the prophet Isaiah prophesied about the final judgment, we, that day, will be able to tell the world that mocked us, that spoke malicious words, that uttered murderous threats against us, “This is our God; we trusted in him, and he saved us.” On the Day of Judgment those words of God which we have spoken will be proven to be pure gold to the whole world. Until that day we pray that God would abide with us everywhere we go. For as we go out to speak his word, we remain confident that those who are vexed by the world shall be vindicated by God.