

## Saint Luke Evangelical Lutheran Church

Sermon by Pastor Anthony E. Schultz

Pentecost 6 **Jeremiah 28:5-9** June 22, 2008

**Then the prophet Jeremiah replied to the prophet Hananiah before the priests and all the people who were standing in the house of the LORD. He said, "Amen! May the LORD do so! May the LORD fulfill the words you have prophesied by bringing the articles of the LORD's house and all the exiles back to this place from Babylon. Nevertheless, listen to what I have to say in your hearing and in the hearing of all the people: From early times the prophets who preceded you and me have prophesied war, disaster and plague against many countries and great kingdoms. But the prophet who prophesies peace will be recognized as one truly sent by the LORD only if his prediction comes true."**



People of God – rescued from the flaming lake of fire in hell by the innocent blood of the very Lamb of God:

When are you going to die? How are you going to die? Do you know? Every day you hear about people who die in the most strange and unexpected ways. Just the other day a man in Pottstown, PA died. He was 65 years old – working on his sun tan. Now I know there are all kinds of reasons why you should use sun screen and all those rays can give you deadly skin cancer. But this poor man simply overheated! He got so warm he had sunstroke – and died! There was the lady the other day named Judy. She was from Pigeon, Michigan. She was on vacation in Florida – going for a boat ride – when this 75 pound flying stingray--comes flying out of the water – and knocks her down. She bumps – *fatally* bumps her head and dies. The flying stingray dies, too. There was a little boy named Johnny – in Goose Creek, SC. He goes swimming in a pool – and accidentally gets a whole bunch of water down into his lungs. He doesn't feel well. He walks home with his mom. He's really *really* tired. He lies down for a nap – and never wakes up. He dies from what they call *dry drowning* – drowning an hour after he gets out of the pool? They say it happens all the time! Did you know that? When will we die? How will we die? We don't know. We don't know a lot about the future. But we know that Jesus holds the future – safe in his nail marked hands. Today – as we consider part of the scroll of the prophet Jeremiah God's Word will remind us:

### What Does The Future Hold?

1. The law promises judgment
2. The gospel promises peace!

The part of God's Word we are concentrating on – is from the scroll of the Prophet Jeremiah. *The People's Bible Commentary on Jeremiah and Lamentations* was written by Prof. David Gosdeck. The scroll of the prophet Jeremiah is 52 chapters long. Prof. Gosdeck says Jeremiah was written to be *read with the ear* – that is it was written to be read out loud. I think it's hard for us to imagine a time – when most people were not able to read and write. We work very hard in this country to teach everyone how to read and write. But back – 627 years before baby Jesus was born – most people did not know how to read. They didn't need to. You don't have to read lots – to grow grapes and wheat and figs and oats. You don't have to read lots – to raise sheep

and goats and cows. You don't have to read lots – to gather firewood – and grind wheat into flour and mix in olive oil and bake bread. You don't have to read lots to cut down trees and saw them into boards and cut them and chisel them and shape them to make furniture. You need to be taught how to do these jobs. You need good examples of how to do these things. But you don't need to read and write lots – to do lots of jobs – especially 627 years before baby Jesus is born. In order to write down and read God's Word – you do need to read and write. The LORD blessed Jeremiah with a scribe – a man named Baruch – to write down God's Word. And the Holy Spirit breathed into Jeremiah the words that needed to be written down. And over a period of 41 years – during the reign of 6 different kings – men like *Amon, Good King Josiah, Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin and finally weak and wicked King Zedakiah!* Zedakiah would run – but there would be no place to hide. He would see his sons put to death! The last thing he would see is his sons put to death. Then they would put out his eyes – and drag him off in chains to die in Babylon. And it didn't have to be that way. *It didn't have to be that way!* Will we be any smarter? Will we learn from these painful mistakes of the past? Or will we simply pitifully repeat them?

When the LORD – the Great I AM – the Holy One of Israel sends judgment – his discipline can be fierce. To warn his people God's Word says: **This is what the LORD said to me (Jeremiah): "Make a yoke out of straps and crossbars and put it on your neck. Then send word to the kings of Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyre and Sidon through the envoys who have come to Jerusalem to Zedekiah king of Judah. Give them a message for their masters and say, 'This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: "Tell this to your masters: With my great power and outstretched arm I made the earth and its people and the animals that are on it, and I give it to anyone I please. Now I will hand all your countries over to my servant Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon; I will make *even the wild animals* subject to him..."** This judgment – the exile of God's people to Babylon would last some 70 years – 70 years! Accept this discipline – **"Bow your neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon; serve him and his people, and you will live. Why will you and your people die by the sword, famine and plague with which the LORD has threatened any nation that will not serve the king of Babylon?** Accept this discipline from the LORD! Repent! Change! Accept this discipline from the LORD! Resist him – and you will pay for eternity with your immortal soul!

Hananiah in unbelievable arrogance and with wicked evil intent announced lies in the name of the LORD! How arrogant to take the yoke that God had commanded Jeremiah to make and wear – and smash it into splinters! How arrogant to take the sentence of 70 years of exile and say it had been reduced to 2 years? How arrogant to say, *This is what the LORD says...* and then to say something – anything that the LORD did not say? Back to business as usual in two years? **Then the prophet Jeremiah replied to the prophet Hananiah before the priests and all the people who were standing in the house of the LORD. He said, "Amen! May the LORD do so! May the LORD fulfill the words you have prophesied by bringing the articles of the LORD's house and all the exiles back to this place from Babylon. Amen!** That would be great! Jeremiah would like nothing better than for that to be true. The problem was – it isn't true! The problem was not as simple as a paper cut! The problem was not as simple as a little warm sudsy anti-bacterial soap and a Dora, Boots and Backpack Band-Aid! We are talking about spiritual broken backs and brain tumors of spiritual hurt and harm! This is not something where you take two aspirin – take a nap and call me in the morning! This is deadly – absolutely deadly danger!

Nevertheless, listen to what I have to say in your hearing and in the hearing of all the people: From early times the prophets who preceded you and me have prophesied war, disaster and plague against many countries and great kingdoms. Is this right? Have prophets who preceded Hananiah and Jeremiah prophesied war, disaster and plague? Of course it is! When was the last time we read the scroll of the prophet Isaiah? Isaiah prophesied against Babylon. **All hands will go limp, every man's heart will melt. Terror will seize them, pain and anguish will grip them; they will writhe like a woman in labor. They will look aghast at each other, their faces aflame!** Isaiah 13:7,8 How nasty is that? Isaiah wrote of judgment against Moab. **Every head is shaved and every beard cut off...Like fluttering birds pushed from the nest are the women of Moab.** Isaiah wrote of judgment for Tyre and Sidon for Egypt and for Cush. Isaiah wrote of judgment for Jerusalem. He wrote of judgment for the whole earth. **See the LORD is going to lay waste the earth and devastate it; he will ruin its face and scatter its inhabitants – it will be the same for priest as for people, for master as for servant, for mistress as for maid, for seller as for buyer, for borrower as for lender, for debtor as for creditor. The earth will be completely laid waste and totally plundered. The LORD has spoken this word.** Isaiah 24:1-3 Do we understand – because of our sins – we all – every one of us deserve God's anger and wrath?

**But the prophet who prophesies peace will be recognized as one truly sent by the LORD only if his prediction comes true.**" We have peace – ultimate soul rescuing peace in the Gospel. In chapter 29 – the next chapter of Jeremiah's scroll – we have one of the most powerful promises of peace from the LORD. **This is what the LORD says: "When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfill my gracious promise to bring you back to this place. For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart..."** There was a little 7 month old girl – who started to cry – in the dark – in the night – in her crib. When her mother hurried in to check on her – she found a snake – a California King Snake wrapped around her baby's leg! Can you imagine how scary that would be? Well, the snake fell off the baby's leg – and a relative picked up the snake and dropped it in a bucket – until the animal control people got there! The real danger is – not a snake around your leg. It's a snake from hell – that wraps around your heart! The danger is not so much physical but spiritual! The devil works to wrap around your heart – on TV! Turn on the news – and it's all about the flooding – "mother nature" – people lucky and unlucky – people who lose things and stuff – saying they lost everything! Turn on the game shows – and people who know trivia – things that are truly *trivial* – winning big money – that promises to make them rich and therefore happy. Watch sports – and people are throwing baseballs and punches at people. People are cheating to win games and cheating to win races. Watch daytime stories that go on for years and years – and no one ever tells the truth – and no one is ever satisfied with what they have and what they are. So they commit adultery again and again and again. Turn on educational TV and they tell you everything is explainable – apart from our Heavenly Father – his wisdom power and love. Watch TV or listen to the radio and you are told again and again – you can't possibly be happy unless you buy the very newest things and stuff. Families and marriages are torn apart – as people race and chase after the things of this world – and lost what has forever priceless worth!

Jesus is the Prince of Peace – who died on the cross to give us forever peace! There was a hand full of hikers – just the other day – out in Washington State on Mt. Ranier. Just the other day – there was a terrible storm – a horrible blizzard on Mt. Ranier! There were 70 mile an hour winds – and snow falling so fast you couldn't see where you were going. A man and his wife and his friend dug into the snow – to try and find shelter from the storm. A man named Eduard – the husband just 31 years old – lay down on the snow – his wife and his best friend lay on top of him. After a long time in the snow – they said – let's rotate. Let someone else absorb the cold. But Eduard would not. He fell asleep in the cold – gave up his life – to save his wife and his friend. Again – willingly Eduard gave us his life to save two people he loved. Jesus gave us his life to save a world full of wretched sinners like us. Jesus gave up his life – so that we might have eternal life. In Jesus alone is blood bought peace for today and peace forever. Amen!

**To God alone all glory!**

**Rev. Anthony E. Schultz**