

Sermon for August 10th, 2025
EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

READINGS

Jeremiah 23:16-30

16 Thus says the LORD of hosts: “Do not listen to the words of the prophets who prophesy to you, filling you with vain hopes. They speak visions of their own minds, not from the mouth of the LORD. **17** They say continually to those who despise the word of the LORD, ‘It shall be well with you’; and to everyone who stubbornly follows his own heart, they say, ‘No disaster shall come upon you.’”

18 For who among them has stood in the council of the LORD

to see and to hear his word,

or who has paid attention to his word and listened?

19 Behold, the storm of the LORD!

Wrath has gone forth,

a whirling tempest;

it will burst upon the head of the wicked.

20 The anger of the LORD will not turn back

until he has executed and accomplished

the intents of his heart.

In the latter days you will understand it clearly.

21 “I did not send the prophets,

yet they ran;

I did not speak to them,

yet they prophesied.

22 But if they had stood in my council,

then they would have proclaimed my words to my people,

and they would have turned them from their evil way,

and from the evil of their deeds.

23 “Am I a God at hand, declares the LORD, and not a God far away? **24** Can a man hide himself in secret places so that I cannot see him? declares the LORD. Do I not fill heaven and earth? declares the LORD. **25** I have heard what the prophets have said who prophesy lies in my name, saying, ‘I have dreamed, I have dreamed!’ **26** How long shall there be lies in the heart of the prophets who prophesy lies, and who prophesy the deceit of their own heart, **27** who think to make my people forget my name by their dreams that they tell one another, even as their fathers forgot my name for Baal? **28** Let the prophet who has a dream tell the dream, but let him who has my word speak my word faithfully. What has straw in common with wheat? declares the LORD. **29** Is not my word like fire, declares the LORD, and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces? **30** Therefore, behold, I am against the prophets, declares the LORD, who steal my words from one another.

Psalms 26

1 Vindicate me, O LORD,

for I have walked in my integrity,

and I have trusted in the LORD without wavering.

2 Prove me, O LORD, and try me;

test my heart and my mind.

3 For your steadfast love is before my eyes,

and I walk in your faithfulness.

4 I do not sit with men of falsehood,
nor do I consort with hypocrites.
5 I hate the assembly of evildoers,
and I will not sit with the wicked.
6 I wash my hands in innocence
and go around your altar, O LORD,
7 proclaiming thanksgiving aloud,
and telling all your wondrous deeds.
8 O LORD, I love the habitation of your house
and the place where your glory dwells.
9 Do not sweep my soul away with sinners,
nor my life with bloodthirsty men,
10 in whose hands are evil devices,
and whose right hands are full of bribes.
11 But as for me, I shall walk in my integrity;
redeem me, and be gracious to me.
12 My foot stands on level ground;
in the great assembly I will bless the LORD.

Acts 20:26-38

26 Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all, **27** for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God. **28** Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. **29** I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; **30** and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. **31** Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish every one with tears. **32** And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified. **33** I coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel. **34** You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my necessities and to those who were with me. **35** In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

36 And when he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all. **37** And there was much weeping on the part of all; they embraced Paul and kissed him, **38** being sorrowful most of all because of the word he had spoken, that they would not see his face again. And they accompanied him to the ship.

Matthew 7:15-23

15 "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. **16** You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? **17** So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. **18** A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. **19** Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. **20** Thus you will recognize them by their fruits. **21** "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. **22** On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' **23** And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'

Our text for meditation this Eighth Sunday after Trinity is on our Old Testament reading.

Grace, mercy and peace to you from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Introduction

A common false teaching going around, coming from “Christian Zionists” like John Hagee, is that God blesses those who bless “Israel” - that is, the geopolitical entity *calling* itself “Israel.” To get to that conclusion, false teachers will misread Genesis 12:3, in which our Lord says to Abraham, “I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” The claim they make is that this means a particular subset of the physical descendants of Abraham – the Jewish people – are subject to this promise from God. Thus whoever “blesses” them, not with blessings like evangelism or the rebuke of the Law, but with *money* is supposed to be blessed, and that means *material* blessing; in their view the only reason God makes countries like America or Canada “rich” is so that they can continue giving unspeakable wealth to the Zionist state and fund various synagogues. Meanwhile, they believe anyone *opposing* the Jewish people is accursed, even if they claim to be Christians.

So many countries give aid to the Jewish state,¹ and yet the promises made by these “Christian Zionist” preachers have turned out to be largely false. America has sent billions of dollars to Israel every year for decades, yet the average American has little to no savings, housing prices have been extremely high to the point where most millennials will never own one, and marriage rates are extremely low. Germany and England send material support to Israel, but their economies are dying, their people are afflicted with rising crime rates, and they hardly have militaries to speak of when it comes to their *own* national defense. The world is undergoing harder and harder times, and those “blessings” promised haven’t materialized. Even if the dispensationalist claims that the blessings are more “spiritual,” as if giving money to Israel meant the Gospel shined more brightly in the countries that did so, this too has shown to be false. Few of these countries are majority Christian, and our moralities have gone down the toilet in record timing.

The Mask

You might wonder why I’m bringing up “Christian Zionism” like this. What does it have to do with our Old Testament reading? Think of it this way, beloved. Jeremiah writes during a time when the nation of Judah was on track to be punished for their wickedness. They had abandoned God almost entirely, either by secretly worshiping idols and the stars² or by observing the sacrifices God required while oppressing the poor around them.³ Judah at this time was all about paying *lip service* to our Lord, but their hearts were far from Him.

As Jeremiah prophesied, they went into Exile for their sins. Why did this happen? In Jeremiah’s day, as he was warning everyone, they had the Law. Josiah had found it a few decades prior and declared a reformation of the country. The Mosaic Law was being proclaimed regularly, so they *knew* that they must fear God, and they *knew better* than to violate the commandments. Yet despite this, the people ignored the commandments to love God and love their neighbors. They decided to reject what Jeremiah was warning about and seek after pleasure, perfidy, and profits.

Why didn’t they listen? They knew what they were doing was wrong, and they heard Jeremiah speak. The problem is that there were *other voices*. There were other prophets, but unlike Jeremiah or Daniel or Ezekiel, these were *false* prophets. They said to the king and all the people “It shall be well

1 Example: military aid during the Gaza conflict that began in 2023.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_military_aid_to_Israel_during_the_Gaza_war

2 Ezekiel 8

3 Jeremiah 5 and elsewhere.

with you,” “no disaster shall come upon you.” They claimed to have dreams, which they believed were *superior* to the Word of God, and would cancel out whatever warnings He had given them previously.

The false prophets of Jeremiah's day gave the people an excuse, a doctrine, a *mask* that they could wear. By believing the dreams these men cooked up, the children of Judah could pretend that they were pious while engaged in all sorts of sins. They believed the prophets when they taught seeing the Temple in Jerusalem was *proof* they were God's chosen people.⁴ You can almost hear them replying to Jeremiah's warnings, saying “Ah, but our Lord brought His glory down into the Temple when Solomon built it, He approves of this city and it shall never fall.” And then they would go right back to making offerings to false gods.

False teachers offer the same masks to people today. The “Christian Zionists” tell people that our lands will be blessed and prosperous and never fall, all because we support the Israelis with lots of foreign aid. But it is not just the Zionists that pass this cheap confidence. The “Prosperity Gospel” teachers tell their audience that everything goes well for them if they just send in a big enough “seed offering.” The “Social Gospel” people tell their parishioners that if they're just *nice* enough to people and never condemn real sin for what it is, then their societies will be happy. Each and every one of these false teachings gives people a mask to wear, a false piety to drape over their impenitent sins as they go about their merry way to hell. Judgment looms on the horizon over our countries, and our theological *excuses* are wearing thin.

Sins for which God obliterates masses of people are being tolerated, or even encouraged. Our Lord killed *twenty four thousand* Israelites for impenitent sexual sin and idolatry in the wilderness;⁵ modern evangelicals today are apparently unafraid of such judgment, because a majority of them are perfectly fine with people fornicating in a “cohabitation” relationship.⁶ A full *quarter* of my home country's marriages are “mixed religion,” meaning that unequal yoking and idolatry in the homes is accepted at alarming rates.⁷ Our lands are tolerating *massive pagan statues* being erected,⁸ mosques are being built, usury is everywhere, our women are signing up for porn sites as a get-rich-quick scheme, and believers are not expecting the judgment that comes with such abominations. Why? Because false teachers are telling us it will be well; oh but we support the Israelis, oh but we put our seed money in the offering plate, oh but we are nice to sexual degenerates and we use the “correct” pronouns. God *can't* judge us, the moderns say. The children of Judah said the exact same thing before they were cast into Exile.

Coming Judgment

God is a God at hand, as He says. He hears everything and sees everything, and that means He can hear our nations' blasphemous thoughts and see right through our false-pious masks. He saw right through the empty promises of the false prophets in Judah, and He knew that the people were using their blasphemous declarations as an excuse to keep sinning. Today, I invite you to ask yourself, “am I wearing a mask of false piety the same way they did?” Am I excusing my own sin, telling myself that some theological loophole gives me permission to live as I please?

I advise you to truly examine yourself here. False teachers are everywhere, and they know that what they are emphasizing has nothing to do with the true Gospel. But God's Word stands forever, and He has declared that there is salvation in *no other name*; it is only by appealing to the mercies of Jesus Christ that you can avoid the wrath to come. Living every day in a truly penitent faith, a faith that turns away from our sins and does not see Christianity as a blank check for sinning freely.

True faith says that only Christ can deliver us from the wrath of God. Not our works. Not our

4 Jeremiah 8:13-14

5 Numbers 25:1-9

6 <https://ifstudies.org/blog/cohabitation-among-evangelicals-a-new-norm>

7 <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2025/02/26/religious-intermarriage/>

8 <https://www.hindustantimes.com/htcity/trips-tours/north-america-s-tallest-ram-idol-rises-in-mississauga-netizens-say-make-canada-great-again-101754396855304.html>

money going to some near-eastern country. Not our nice-sounding words, spoken softly. Only the God-man who bled for our sins, who washes us in the waters of Baptism, who promises to come back to deliver us from the judgment to come – only *Jesus!* And we will take off whatever confidence we had in worldly things, whatever mask we were wearing, and bow humbly at His feet to receive the mercy He promises.

We must repent and believe in Him – every day. The great tragedy of Judah as it went into Exile was how willing God was the entire time to accept them back, to offer them peace, and to forgive all that they had done; all they had to do was turn from their idols and ask God for forgiveness. Our populations have the same offer, and if they turn around and clean up their acts then it is fairly certain that God will restore much of our countries' well-being. More important to us is that we, as a *body of Christians*, because He is offering deliverance from something far worse than an exile or being taken as a colony. And He is offering us Paradise as the alternative to it. Let us then cast off our masks, say “Lord have mercy upon me, a sinner,” and rejoice at His promised restoration.

Now the Peace of our Lord, which surpasses all understanding, guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.