

Sermon for August 9th, 2026
TENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

READINGS

Jeremiah 7:1-11

1 The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD: **2** “Stand in the gate of the LORD's house, and proclaim there this word, and say, Hear the word of the LORD, all you men of Judah who enter these gates to worship the LORD. **3** Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Amend your ways and your deeds, and I will let you dwell in this place. **4** Do not trust in these deceptive words: ‘This is the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD.’

5 “For if you truly amend your ways and your deeds, if you truly execute justice one with another, **6** if you do not oppress the sojourner, the fatherless, or the widow, or shed innocent blood in this place, and if you do not go after other gods to your own harm, **7** then I will let you dwell in this place, in the land that I gave of old to your fathers forever.

8 “Behold, you trust in deceptive words to no avail. **9** Will you steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, make offerings to Baal, and go after other gods that you have not known, **10** and then come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, ‘We are delivered!’—only to go on doing all these abominations? **11** Has this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? Behold, I myself have seen it, declares the LORD.

Psalm 92

1 It is good to give thanks to the LORD,
to sing praises to your name, O Most High;
2 to declare your steadfast love in the morning,
and your faithfulness by night,
3 to the music of the lute and the harp,
to the melody of the lyre.
4 For you, O LORD, have made me glad by your work;
at the works of your hands I sing for joy.
5 How great are your works, O LORD!
Your thoughts are very deep!
6 The stupid man cannot know;
the fool cannot understand this:
7 that though the wicked sprout like grass
and all evildoers flourish,
they are doomed to destruction forever;
8 but you, O LORD, are on high forever.
9 For behold, your enemies, O LORD,
for behold, your enemies shall perish;
all evildoers shall be scattered.
10 But you have exalted my horn like that of the wild ox;
you have poured over me fresh oil.
11 My eyes have seen the downfall of my enemies;
my ears have heard the doom of my evil assailants.
12 The righteous flourish like the palm tree
and grow like a cedar in Lebanon.
13 They are planted in the house of the LORD;

they flourish in the courts of our God.
14 They still bear fruit in old age;
they are ever full of sap and green,
15 to declare that the LORD is upright;
he is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him.

1 Corinthians 12:1-11

1 Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be uninformed. 2 You know that when you were pagans you were led astray to mute idols, however you were led. 3 Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking in the Spirit of God ever says “Jesus is accursed!” and no one can say “Jesus is Lord” except in the Holy Spirit.

4 Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; 5 and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; 6 and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. 7 To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. 8 For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, 9 to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, 10 to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. 11 All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills.

Luke 19:41-48

41 And when he drew near and saw the city, he wept over it, 42 saying, “Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. 43 For the days will come upon you, when your enemies will set up a barricade around you and surround you and hem you in on every side 44 and tear you down to the ground, you and your children within you. And they will not leave one stone upon another in you, because you did not know the time of your visitation.”

45 And he entered the temple and began to drive out those who sold, 46 saying to them, “It is written, ‘My house shall be a house of prayer,’ but you have made it a den of robbers.”

47 And he was teaching daily in the temple. The chief priests and the scribes and the principal men of the people were seeking to destroy him, 48 but they did not find anything they could do, for all the people were hanging on his words.

Our meditation for this Tenth 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

Most people alive today are on their way to hell. They have not believed in the Gospel, preferring to stay in their sins and remain in their false religions, resisting every attempt the Holy Spirit makes to bring them to the faith. They know that the things they are doing are wrong, that their beliefs are wrong, and that they have nothing good waiting for them at the end of their earthly lives, yet they do not repent. Scripture attests that this is a choice as well, saying that the nonbeliever suppresses the truth so they can continue doing what they are doing, and is thus without excuse; some of them even become reprobates, whom God gives over to their own depraved desires.¹

For us Christians, this leads to a great deal of angst. The Gospel is self-evidently true while the threat of God's wrath is self-evidently terrifying. Why then won't these people turn around?

1 Romans 1:18-25

Theologians have tried to answer in theological ways for over a thousand years now, but their answers come off as either insufficient or wildly off base. Some of them decide that the nonbelievers are the way they are because God predetermined for them to be damned; this doesn't work, because God says He wants everyone to be saved!² Others try to say that there is no need for them to believe, because everyone in their estimation ends up in Heaven; this does not work either, for Scripture is explicit about damnation being an eternal thing.³ We are left with the only answer being that the damned are the damned because that is what they want to be. Of their own free will, they choose to reject the true God; our Old Testament reading helps us to understand it.

Most do Not Repent

“Amend your ways and your deeds, and I will let you dwell in this place.” This is the heart of the message Jeremiah was told to pronounce to the children of Judah. Predictably, they did not listen. Why is this the case? They did not heed his warning because they did not care. The pressure placed on them by the world, the flesh and the devil created a powerful counterbalance to the proclaimed Word of God, the witness of their conscience, and the knowledge they have of right and wrong. For one thing, they had to work hard manual labor all the time, whether that is in the fields or in the sea or working to build. The oppression that God speaks of involves the very audience that the prophet spoke to, with many of the uncharitable and manipulative among Judah being victims of exploitation themselves. Why would they listen to someone telling them to clean up their act when they were struggling under heavy yokes of labor? Why would they obey the man telling them to be *even poorer* than they were under subsistence wages?

For a moment, let us use our imaginations. Jeremiah went to the gate of the Temple in Jerusalem to proclaim his oracle. A stream of people were going in and out, some for making sacrifices and some for official business. These were ostensibly *religious* people, since those who cared nothing for the Lord would not be at His Temple. Put yourself in one of these men's shoes my friends; you are going to the Temple *to make a sacrifice to God*, leading your goat by a small loop, when there at the gate is an angry prophet shouting (to speak above the noisy crowd) that God is angry. “Well of course!” you might reply, “Why do you think I'm making this here sacrifice?” The prophet replies that you must stop sinning in the first place, and you get confused; *what sins*? You were told that making the sacrifices takes those away, what need is there to change? That is what the Temple is there for in the first place, just as the Levites taught you when you were young. And so you go on your merry way, offer your goat to the priests, and the go right back to doing wickedness.

Making matters worse, Jeremiah's message was in all likelihood drowned out in the ears of the people. Louder voices than Jeremiah's were saying “This is the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD” as though it were some magic slogan. For close to four hundred years, that Temple had stood, and the *false* prophets pointed to it as a sign of stability. Such false prophets were popular in their day, because they spoke positively about the future, reassuring an anxious population that the nation was safe. If you or I were among the children of Judah in Jeremiah's day, there would be a *very* powerful temptation to listen to the man who says “everything will be okay” instead of the angry prophet foretelling doom.

So if we put ourselves in the sandals of the average child of Judah in Jeremiah's day, what do we have?

- People were stretched thin economically and suffering, so they turned to exploiting others to get by.
- They were taught that ceremonial observances like sacrifices rendered them acceptable to God entirely, with no real need for inner repentance.
- False prophets were more numerous than true ones, and they gave a far more comfortable message.

2 1 Timothy 2:1-4

3 Revelation 14:9-12, wherein the Apostle St. John says that the damned (the “worshippers of the beast”) are tormented.

It ought not surprise us that the people did not repent until after they were taken in to the Babylonian Exile. For that matter, it should not surprise us that people don't want to repent *now*, either! Honestly, what difference is there in the people between Jeremiah's day and ours? Economic hardship is everywhere, most believers are shallow in their faith *at best*, and false teachers outnumber true teachers by a ratio of about 5000 to 1. The major difference is the “information age,” wherein anyone can find the true doctrines of Scripture on the internet – which is just as accessible as pornography, cult websites, endless propaganda, rumor mongering “drama” channels and scams. Most of us believers are spending most of our time navigating modern life under the oppressive fog of unprecedented mass temptation; most of humanity (including most of the visible Church) is absolutely *lost* in it.

Shall we remain?

The deal God offers the children of Judah is this: change your ways and you will get to remain in the land. End the oppression, end the murders and thefts and idolatry and adultery, and the Lord will avert the disaster of Babylonian invasion. The Scriptures attest that Judah *did not take this deal*, because few of them were willing to take more financial losses, accuse their own motivations, lay in dust and ashes and repent as they were told. So the ones who survived Nebuchadnezzar's slaughter campaign went off into Exile, where they lived as impoverished slaves for seventy years.

This raises the question: is God saying the same to us right now? Are we doomed to invasion and destruction and plague unless all of our society engages in repentance the way Nineveh did in Jonah?⁴ The answer is “possibly.” He always reserves the right to make the same offer to any nation, as our Lord relates later in Jeremiah's book:

If at any time I declare concerning a nation or a kingdom, that I will pluck up and break down and destroy it, and if that nation, concerning which I have spoken, turns from its evil, I will relent of the disaster that I intended to do to it. And if at any time I declare concerning a nation or a kingdom that I will build and plant it, and if it does evil in my sight, not listening to my voice, then I will relent of the good that I had intended to do to it.⁵

Yet at the same time, what does God say to Abraham when it comes to judgment on Sodom? If He finds fifty, forty five, forty, twenty, or even just *ten* righteous people in Sodom, then He will not destroy it.⁶ But what does our Lord do? He removes the righteous people *from* Sodom and *then* destroys it along with its wicked inhabitants. God reserves the right to offer the same deal to any nation that He did to Judah, but He may also stay His Hand for the sake of the righteous, and if all else fails then He will evacuate the righteous before judging the nation.

As it stands now, we have a massive sin problem. It hasn't been this bad in the world in a long time, at least not to the naked observer. Previous generations, even those in medieval Christendom were just as bad as we are, but it was never this *openly* wicked. Parades are held worldwide in celebration of depravity. Young men are being sent to die in pointless wars between competing nations ruled over by evil men. Great masses of women have turned to selling their bodies to make a profit, while campaigning for the “right” to kill their children through abortion. Housing is unaffordable in every country, and the poor have responded by stealing, gambling or – barring financial success – suffocating their sorrows in an ocean of drugs. And all the while, massive corporations are racing to install a surveillance state that watches and polices our every action, word and transaction. Mankind is poisoning their food, neglecting or abusing their children, ruining lives for fun, and more. What is the Church doing in light of this? Not speaking as Jeremiah did – oh no. Instead, the Church halfheartedly mumbles the Gospel while policing impolite speech.

4 Jonah 3:6-10

5 Jeremiah 18:7-10

6 Genesis 18:22-33

I have a feeling that God is getting ready to do *something* my friends.. He may punish nations the way He punished Judah, offering through the witness of faithful ministers a way of repentance first; seeing as this was fruitless in Judah, it would likely be fruitless here, leaving only violence and plague in response. Perhaps He shall stay His Hand for the sake of the righteous among nations, those who follow the Gospel. But one thing is for certain, namely the return of Christ for the final Judgment. Let us pray we see that glorious Day in our lifetimes.

Conclusion

Yet let us pray more fervently that people *shall* repent before that Day arrives. Our God is not silent, nor does He sit in Heaven doing nothing all day; He *acts*, for this is His world and He is intimately involved in it. The men and women who are in unrepentant sin are thus on borrowed time. My friends, do you know any of them? Have you spoken to them? Do you love them enough to tell them of the need for repentance, to bear fruit in keeping with repentance, to be Baptized and to entrust themselves to Jesus? If so, for their sake you do well to reach out. It could be that your message leads them to penitent faith and salvation; it could also mean that the judgment upon our nations is stayed as your friend (and more people); it could mean a hastening of Christ's Return, and the true changes needed to fix the problems of sin and death. To say nothing else my friends, let us witness to them and care for their souls!

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