

Sermon for November 9, 2025 – Final Judgment

Jeremiah 26:1-6 (EHV)

Theme: Listen to the LORD.

- 1) He wants you to repent
- 2) He wants you to trust in His mercy

*In the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim son of Josiah, king of Judah, the following word came from the LORD.*

*<sup>2</sup>This is what the LORD says. Stand in the courtyard of the LORD's house, and speak to people from the cities and towns of Judah who have come to worship at the House of the LORD. Tell them everything I have commanded you to tell them. Do not hold back a single word. <sup>3</sup>Maybe they will listen, and everyone will turn from his evil way. Then I will relent and not bring about the disaster that I was planning because of the evil things they have done.*

*<sup>4</sup>You are also to say this to him.*

*This is what the LORD says. If you will not listen to me and follow my law, which I have set before you, <sup>5</sup>and if you do not listen to the words of my servants the prophets, whom I have sent to you again and again (but you have not listened), <sup>6</sup>then I will make this house like Shiloh, and I will make the name of this city a curse word for all the nations of the earth.*

The Jews in Jeremiah's day were proud of their heritage. God had chosen their ancestors to be His special people, miraculously delivering them from Egypt and planting them in the land of Canaan. He promised to be their God, protecting and blessing them if they kept His Word.

Sadly, the Jews strayed from God's Word, embracing the beliefs and practices of the surrounding nations. Even though they still called themselves "God's people," they stopped following His decrees. The LORD sent prophet after prophet to call them to repentance, but the people ignored, mocked, and persecuted them—finding security in their heritage rather than in the LORD Himself.

Therefore, the LORD commissioned Jeremiah to deliver a hard message to a new king: disaster would soon overtake them. This was not because the LORD despised His people but because He loved them. He wanted them to repent so He could relent.

Members of Divine Word, we also enjoy a rich heritage in God's Word and thank Him for it. However, don't let pride in that heritage lead to complacency. Don't think you don't need worship or Bible study because you "know it all already." The LORD warns: *So let him who thinks he stands be careful that he does not fall.*<sup>i</sup>

With the message God gave Jeremiah for the Jews as our guide, learn to **listen to the LORD**. 1) He wants you to repent. 2) He wants you to trust in His mercy.

Part One: He wants you to repent.

Our sermon text begins:

*In the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim son of Josiah, king of Judah, the following word came from the LORD. <sup>2</sup>This is what the LORD says. Stand in the courtyard of the LORD's house, and speak to people from the cities and towns of Judah who have come to worship at the House of the LORD. Tell them everything I have commanded you to tell them. Do not hold back a single word.*

Why did God command Jeremiah to preach in the temple court? Didn't those who came to the temple already believe?

Even though the worshippers appeared religious by fulfilling the outward requirements of God's law, the LORD saw that their hearts were far from Him. They treated God's Word like a buffet: picking only what they wanted to hear and believe. But the LORD wanted them to heed all of it, which is why He commanded Jeremiah not to hold back a single word given to him.

Like the Jews of Jeremiah's day, we all have a desire to select what we want to believe from the Bible and disregard the teachings we find objectionable. For instance, the world views the Bible's teachings on the roles of men and women as outdated, leading us to question them. Divorce is so prevalent that we hesitate to speak against it. The list goes on, but I believe you understand the point: our sinful nature would rather listen to culture or our own desires than to God's Word. May the LORD forgive us and protect us from treating His Word so lightly!

The LORD continues: <sup>3</sup>*Maybe they will listen, and everyone will turn from his evil way. Then I will relent and not bring about the disaster that I was planning because of the evil things they have done.*

God's goal was not destruction, but repentance. This is always His desire. Just as He spared Nineveh when they repented at Jonah's preaching, He was prepared to spare Judah if they repented at Jeremiah's preaching. God's warnings are grace, meant to drive us back to Him.

<sup>4</sup>*You are also to say this to him. This is what the LORD says. If you will not listen to me and follow my law, which I have set before you, <sup>5</sup>and if you do not listen to the words of my servants the prophets, whom I have sent to you again and again (but you have not listened)...*

The Jews believed they were safe because they were "God's people." They trusted the temple building more than the LORD who was to be worshiped there. They lost sight of the fact that they belonged to God, not because of their worthiness, but because of His mercy. Pride in themselves led them to reject the LORD's repeated calls to repentance. Consequently, instead of heeding God's faithful prophets, they slandered and persecuted them.

The warning God gave the Jews in Jeremiah's time is also relevant to us. It is tempting to attend church and go through the motions of worship but not truly **listen** to God's Word. It's easy to rely on our church membership, Lutheran heritage, or Christian identity to save us instead of Christ himself. Too often we fall into the trap of serving two gods: the LORD on Sunday mornings and

ourselves the rest of the week. We easily find excuses to avoid worship, neglect God's Word, and challenge its teachings.

Yes, we all need to heed God's warning, repent, and turn back to the LORD in faith because who among us is without sin?

And if we don't repent? The LORD says: "*6then I will make this house like Shiloh, and I will make the name of this city a curse word for all the nations of the earth.*"

Before the temple was built in Jerusalem, God appointed Shiloh to be the place where He would meet with His people. But when the people of that time took the LORD for granted and refused to listen to His repeated calls to repent, He removed His presence from that place and allowed it to be destroyed. The same fate awaited Jerusalem if the people refused to repent.

But what about us? Jesus promised that *where two or three have gathered together in my name, there I am among them.*<sup>ii</sup> Jesus is here right now, calling us to repent and trust in Him alone for salvation. He is here, ready to share His incredible love and protection with us. But if we ever think we don't need to meditate on His Word or heed His call to repent, He may remove His presence from us like He removed it from Shiloh and Jerusalem.

May this lead us to pray: "LORD, forgive me for any time I have put my trust in church membership, Lutheran heritage, or anything else rather than you. Forgive my lack of zeal in studying your Word and learning more about you. Create in me a new heart and restore to me the joy of your salvation."

### Part Two: He wants you to trust His mercy

Brothers and sisters in Christ, if you truly mean what you just prayed, know that the LORD forgives you for Jesus' sake.

King David once wrote:

*<sup>8</sup>The LORD is compassionate and gracious,  
slow to anger, abounding in mercy.*

*<sup>9</sup>He will not always accuse.*

*He will not keep his anger forever.*

*<sup>10</sup>He does not treat us as our sins deserve.*

*He does not repay us according to our guilty deeds.*

*<sup>11</sup>Yes, as high as the heavens are above the earth,  
so powerful is his mercy toward those who fear him.*

*<sup>12</sup>As distant as the east is from the west,  
so far has he removed our rebellious acts from us.*

*<sup>13</sup>As a father has compassion on his children,  
so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him.<sup>iii</sup>*

The LORD takes no pleasure in the death of anyone but wants everyone to be saved. Therefore, He sent His only begotten Son into the world. At Christ's cross, your every sin—your selfishness, pride, and idolatry—was placed on Him. Jesus suffered the punishment you deserved so you might stand before the LORD forgiven through faith in Him.

Yes, Jesus lived perfectly for you, died for you, and rose to reconcile you to God. That is why He is constantly calling you to repent of your sins and turn to Him in faith.

On October 31, 1517, Martin Luther posted 95 theses (debate points) on the Castle Church door in Wittenberg. This event sparked the Great Reformation of the Western Church. Do you know what the very 1<sup>st</sup> thesis said? *When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said, "Repent" [Matt. 4:17], he willed the entire life of believers to be one of repentance.*

The word repent means "to turn" or "to have a change of mind." Repentance, therefore, is not just a one-time act; it is a constant, Holy Spirit-motivated turning away from sin and toward Christ in faith. This constant repentance is necessary because your sinful flesh will always tempt you away from Christ. That is why you need to be in God's Word daily, studying His Law to recognize your need for Jesus and trusting His Gospel to receive the undeserved mercy God shows you in Christ. Jesus paid for your sins in full to reconcile you to His Father. The LORD has chosen you to be His dearly loved child so that you can serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence and blessedness both now and forever.

Because Christ has borne the full judgment of your sins, there is no condemnation left for you. On the Last Day, you will not stand in fear, but in joy, for the Lord who once warned Judah to repent of their sins is the same God who rescued you in Christ. He promises never to abandon those who trust in Him, but will deliver you from every evil attack and bring you safely into His heavenly kingdom.<sup>iv</sup>

Therefore, dear brothers and sisters in Christ, do not treat God's Word with contempt. **Listen to the Lord.** He calls you to repent. He invites you to trust His mercy. Amen.

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<sup>i</sup> 1 Corinthians 10:12 EHV

<sup>ii</sup> Matthew 18:20 EHV

<sup>iii</sup> Psalm 103:8-13 EHV

<sup>iv</sup> Cf. 2 Timothy 4:18