

June 28, 2026 – Jeremiah 28:5-9 & Matthew 10:34-42

One of the worst people you can have in your life is a friend who won't tell you the truth. You'd think that fact might be obvious, but it's actually a very common trap to fall into. Because we love surrounding ourselves with people who will lie to us.

We say we don't, but we do. We say we want to hear the brutal, unvarnished truth. But what we really want is someone who tells us that we're right. "It was the best decision you could make. Those people criticizing you are dead wrong. They don't know what you were going through. Don't listen to them. Listen to me. I'm your friend. And I think you did the right thing."

And this tendency to surround ourselves with sycophants and to create an echo chamber for our bad ideas has become all the more prevalent in the age of social media and 24 hour news channels. Because it is easier than ever to find someone who will tell you that you're doing the right thing. Someone who will give you bad advice. Someone who will tell you that your sin isn't sin. That the evil thing you're doing isn't actually evil. And that God's law can be ignored because you're right and God is wrong.

That's really at the core of what was happening in our Old Testament lesson today. Judah during this time was at war. And it was going horribly. It was, in fact, a war that they couldn't possibly win.

Babylon was on the move. Assyria to their north and Egypt to their south had already been conquered. And both of them had armies far stronger than anything the Israelites could muster. Peace was out of the question. War was a foolhardy thought. Conquest and death seemed inevitable.

And into the midst of all this hopeless turmoil walks the king's own prophet, Hananiah. Saying, "It'll be fine. God will protect us. Two years, tops, and Babylon will head home. Yeah, we've disobeyed God a few times, but he doesn't care about a little idolatry. A little greed. A little immorality. He always comes through for us. You don't have anything to fear."

It was a nice thought. And as Jeremiah hears this prophecy of peace, he tells Hananiah flat out, "Amen! I hope you're right. I hope God does appear and solve all our problems. It'd be great if he did. But let me tell you what I think is actually going to happen.

"I think God is angry. I think he's been warning you about idolatry and corruption and immorality for the last 200 years and you haven't listened to a word of it. And I think at this point, the people would be better off to listen to all those prophets of the past who spoke about this exact situation that you're in, and not some fool like you who doesn't know what he's talking about. Because I know what God has told me will happen and it doesn't include peace."

And like most real friends who tell us the things we don't want to hear, but the things that we need to hear, Jeremiah was hated for what he said. His family and friends abandoned him. He was driven out of entire cities because people so vehemently hated hearing the truth. But then again, that shouldn't surprise us. Because the same thing happened to Jesus when he delivered the exact same message.

That's right. For all that we look to Jesus for hope and peace and comfort, His message to us today is very Jeremian. "I have not come to bring peace to the earth. I have come to bring conflict. I have come to bring suffering. I have come, in fact, to bring death."

Because God isn't going to simply sweep in and save the day. He isn't just going appear out of nowhere and clean up the mess that our idolatry and corruption and immorality have created. We made our beds. We have to sleep in them. And as much as He loves us, he's not going to simply erase the consequences of sin in our lives, just as he didn't for Judah in Jeremiah's day. Even when those consequences mean suffering for doing what is right.

He's not going to do it because that's not the peace that he's offering us. When those angels announced Jesus' birth with the words, "*peace among those with whom [God] is pleased*" they didn't mean that Jesus was simply going to come in and erase all our problems. And when Jesus looked at His disciples and said, "*My peace I give to you,*" he didn't mean that following Him would be easy.

What those words meant, and what they still mean, is that for all of the conflict and pain and turmoil we feel. With ourselves. With our fellow man. With the world itself around us. We can at least rely on one source of peace in our lives. Peace with God.

Paul tells us today, "*But now we are released from the law, having died to that which held us captive, so that we serve not under the old written code but in the new life of the Spirit.*" We have been released from that condemnation that Judah suffered for their sinfulness. We have been released from the wrath that God bore against them. We have been released from that hopeless Babylonian exile, and given the gift of worshiping in God's holy house forever.

We have peace with God through Jesus Christ. And that may sound like a hollow gift. What's the good of peace with someone who can't get rid of the turmoil in my life? Except that he can. Just because God won't wipe away the effects of sin in this life, doesn't mean he won't wipe them away in the next. In the life that comes after death.

And in that life a prophet will receive a prophet's reward and a righteous man will receive a righteous man's reward. Now tell me, what good would a prophet's reward do you in this life? The prophet's of the Old Testament were chased by murderous thugs and tossed down into cisterns. That was their only reward.

What good would a righteous man's reward do you in this life? The righteous men of the Bible were persecuted and mocked. Thrown in prison and crucified on a cross. That was their only reward.

In the midst of sin, everything is turned upside down. The unrighteous are glorified and the righteous suffer. But in the next life, all will be made right. Because there will be peace with God through Jesus Christ. A prophet who does not foolishly proclaim peace in this life, because he knows there is no peace as long as sin exists. A true prophet only proclaims peace in the life that is to come.

We know that true prophet. And His Word to us has already come to pass. For he declared that though you destroy this temple, he would raise it up again in three days. Though you crucify his body, he would live again on Easter morning. In the resurrection, Jesus proved without a doubt that he truly did come in the name of the Lord. And that his words are trustworthy and true.

So if he tells us that we have a reward waiting for us in heaven, then we have a reward waiting for us in heaven. If he tells us that in receiving him we receive the one who sent him, then we know that the Lord is truly in our midst. If he tells us that in losing our lives we will find them, then we know that no matter what loss may come, we have found something worth far more than this sinful flesh can offer.

He is our true and faithful friend, trustworthy in all things. He tells what we don't want to hear: that we are sinners condemned by God along with all the rest of this sinful world, and so stuck in a mortal life of suffering and injustice.

But he also tells us the truly good news that we desperately need to hear: that he has paid the penalty of our sin and he has the power to make all things new. And that in him we have a reward that cannot be lost. That everyone who loses his mortal, fleeting life for his sake finds immortal, eternal life in him.

It may not always be the message we want to hear. But it's always the message we need to hear. Because it's the truth. And, after all, who is Christ but the Way, the Truth, and the Life. The one whose word is truth. And the one who frees us from the father of lies that we may live in his truth everyday. Amen.