

September 3, 2017

Two politicians were talking, one told the other one, "I'll quit telling lies about you, if you quit telling the truth about me."

Our first reading is from the book of the prophet Jeremiah. Jeremiah lived about 600 years before Christ. He was also from the southern kingdom and God said, "I want you to go to the northern kingdom and tell the king what he needs to do." Jeremiah was probably 17 years old. We think of the prophets as these old guys with long hair and gray beards. People didn't live that long. And plus, God does not call the ones we think He should call. The world used to look at age as people who knew things, were wise. No, we just have euthanasia and say, "get out of here." Back then, they wouldn't do that. God does not use the people the world thinks He should use. So, he calls on a 17-year-old and says, "go up north and tell the king what I want you to tell him." The king is surrounded by false prophets. These false prophets are just yes men. They are always talking to the king, "oh yes king, whatever you do is going to be great." At the time that Jeremiah is selected by God, the northern kingdom is in a quandary. They are being attacked from the north. Egypt on the west is still a major player in the power of the kingdom. So, do they think he should make an alliance with Egypt? Should he surrender to the incoming power and be at their mercy? They are trying to figure out what to do. Jeremiah goes and he tells the king, "Surrender; God will take care of you, the nation will survive." But, the king doesn't like that. He has Jeremiah thrown out and he goes ahead and listens to the other guys, makes an alliance, and the northern kingdom disappears from history forever. It's called the last ten tribes of Israel. They're not lost, they were assimilated by intermarriage. So, we see that being a prophet is not always fun. That's why Jeremiah is called, "the complaining prophet." All throughout the book of Jeremiah, he's whining and he's complaining. God, "Why did you make me do this? God, I don't want to go do that, God, how come?" And today, once again he is complaining, "You duped me oh Lord, You tricked me, and I let You do it." Then he says, "Why? If I didn't do it, if I didn't explain Your Word, if I didn't preach Your Word, it would explode out of my chest." Because it's that powerful. Now, Jeremiah knew what happens to prophets who go against the king. They're beaten, they're tortured, they're killed. And guess what happened to him? The same thing. He was even stuck in a hole in the ground with mud where he couldn't get out at one time. They murdered him because the Word of God is not popular in the world ever. We think it's not popular today more than ever, but no. It's always been this way. People don't want to hear the word of God because, it takes them out of their comfort zone. They don't want to be uncomfortable. They want to have their conscience be hidden so they don't have to worry about a guilty conscience. Serving the Lord isn't fun and games. Serving the Lord can be painful. And, Jesus does this with Peter, same kind of thing. Jesus, we know, did not want to do the Father's will. We see it in the Garden of Gethsemane, the Garden of Olives. What did Jesus say? "Take this cup away from me, but, if Your will be done, okay." Not mine, yours. Same kind of thing Jeremiah said. "I don't want to do it, but okay." Jesus was that way, He didn't want to do it. He didn't need help or temptation. Peter last week said, "You are the Christ, the son of the living God." No one else got that. And right after he says that, he gets in trouble. "No Jesus, you're not going to go die, you can't go die." Because, Peter still thinks He is a messiah, a warrior king. He is going to save Israel from the oppressors. He still had that thought in his head. That was the propaganda of the times. And Jesus says, "Get behind me Satan!" The word Satan with a small "s" means roadblock or tripping stone. With a capital "S" it means the devil, Lucifer.

Now, where was Jesus tempted before and He had to say that? Forty days and forty nights he was in the desert before His ministry started. And what did Satan do, tempted Him three times, right? "Throw

yourself off the paraclete of the temple, the angels will catch you. Turn these rocks into bread. Bow down to me and I will give you all the kingdoms of the world.” And what did Jesus say? “Get behind Me Satan!” “Get out of here.” So, Peter is tempting, he is tempting Jesus not to follow the Father’s will, not to do what the Father says. When we don’t follow the will of God, it’s called a sin. And we are acting like Satans. We are acting like people that are trying to tell Jesus what we want to do, not what He wants us to do. And what does Jesus say? He makes us a promise that would never get him elected. To follow me, you must take up your cross. There’s that cross thing again. We hate that cross thing. We don’t like our cross. It means suffering, it means pain, it means being unpopular. All these different kinds of negative things in the world today. And yet, it brings us eternal salvation. None of us like our crosses. All of us have to work. As we get older it gets worse, right? None of us like our crosses.

Just this last week on Tuesday I got a call from this new pharmacy. I didn’t know who there were. The doctors ordering medication, I have to have gel injections in my knees. They left a message so I called them back. And then....I hate calling these places. It takes every ounce of my being, not to blow up. You get the automated voice and you have to give it all this information, then it throws you over to a person, and they take all this information, again! I hate to repeat myself, I’m a man and I’m a libra. Then, he says, “Oh, I can’t handle that I have to give you to somebody else.” You put it all on the computer, why do I have to say it again? So, on Tuesday, I’m on with this lady and she goes through it and she says, “Do you have an appointment with your doctor for this?” No, he said you were going to ship it to him and then he would call me for the appointment. “Well, I have to call him right now.” I’m sitting there, nobody else who had the injections has had this problem. I’m on hold for 25 minutes and then thank God, I lost the signal. I had to breath, I had to calm down. I waited for two days before I said, “Okay, I’ve got to call them back.” The automated voice....then, this guy, I tell him, “look, you can’t help me, why don’t you just move me on?” “Oh no sir.....” so I tell him again, and then I get over to this lady and I’m already to have to do it again, and I tell her just my name and my birthday and she says, “and why are you calling?” I tell her and she says, “I’m scratching my head because this should never have happened to you.” Thank you, God, my cross has been lifted. The little ones are the worst ones. Right? Oh my gosh. So at the very end I’m thinking I’ll just pray. You know what she tells me? “I sent a fax to your doctor and as soon as he faxes it back to me, the medication will be down there with him.” But she said, “you need to call him and say you got a fax.” No I don’t. that’s why he’s paying these people. Huh. So I didn’t call him. That is my biggest cross in my life, having to do that. Most people say, “oh if that’s your biggest cross...” No its’ not, but those little ones are the worst.

We have our crosses. We can either get really angry and blow up, or we can just wait, and then we can make a joke out of it. Don’t complain. Carry your cross very well. Because you know why? What did Jesus tell us? “I’m carrying the other half.” “Don’t worry he said, I’m carrying the other half.” Can you imagine, think about this. What if he was not carrying the other half of our cross. How bad that would really be. Think about that.

We are not supposed to be comfortable. We’re supposed to be challenged. We’re supposed to live up to God’s Word. It’s hard, because the world wants us to take it easy. Oh, you have an ache, instead of offering it up, people go and check out one of the hundreds of pain relievers. The world has everything there to do away with sacrifice. “Oh, don’t give up anything, go fast, have it your way.” No. Jesus said, “Take up your cross and follow me. Crosses are the only way to salvation. So if you get too comfortable, and God really loves you, He’s going to send you another little cross, to shake you up and remind you. Jeremiah wasn’t comfortable, but the will of God has to be followed. God Bless you.