

BLESSED IS THE NATION WHOSE GOD IS THE LORD

They are people who listen to God's Word -- They are people who preserve the truth
Jeremiah 7:25-28

TEXT: *From the time your forefathers left Egypt until now, day after day, again and again I sent you my servants the prophets. But they did not listen to me or pay attention. They were stiff-necked and did more evil than their forefathers.' "When you tell them all this, they will not listen to you; when you call to them, they will not answer. Therefore say to them, 'This is the nation that has not obeyed the LORD its God or responded to correction. Truth has perished; it has vanished from their lips.*

In Jesus' name, my fellow redeemed:

"Call Day!" It is an exciting time for the members of the WELS because that is the day that our men and women fully trained for the public ministry in our church body graduate from their Martin Luther College, or from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary and receive divine calls from schools and congregations from all over. The excitement includes the wonderment of where the new life and ministry of these called workers will begin.

God called Jeremiah directly. Jeremiah was about the same age as are our young graduates when the Lord called him to serve in the public ministry. The Bible says: *The word of the LORD came to me, saying, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations."* But Jeremiah didn't want to serve. He said: *"I do not know how to speak; I am only a child." ... But the LORD said: "Do not say, 'I am only a child.' You must go to everyone I send you to and say whatever I command you. Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you and will rescue you."* Jer 1
Because of his difficult assignment, unhappiness of being called to preach to a people who would not listen, the hardships and threats of death during his ministry, the Lord also commanded him never to marry, or to enjoy normal social relationships with others. He would have to carry out his 42-year ministry alone, and only with the Lord.

What a blessed ministry our young men and women who are about to become pastors and teachers in our church body! For we are a people who listen to God's Word. We are a people who preserve the truth. And Scripture declares: BLESSED IS THE NATION WHOSE GOD IS THE LORD!

While our young men and women entering the preaching and teaching ministry of our church body today do not get such a traumatic message from the Lord in regard to their respective calls, as did Jeremiah, we know that their work will not be easy. That is because the blessed islands of God's grace that we call Lutheran congregations are surrounded by the polluted waters of a society and culture that is not far removed from what Jeremiah had to face in his day. God's complaint was this: *From the time your forefathers left Egypt until now, day after day, again and again I sent you my servants the prophets. But they did not listen to me or pay attention. They were stiff-necked and did more evil than their forefathers.' "When you tell them all this, they will not listen to you; when you call to them, they will not answer.* Are things any different today?

My parents and grandparents would not recognize the culture in which we live today. I'm not speaking of the sins that are committed for there is nothing new under the sun when it comes to sin. I am speaking of the toleration of sin by calling what was once gross sin and perversion "virtue and love." What was done in secret in their day is now taught as sophisticated behavior. Those of us who still honor marriage as God commands, and expect our children and grandchildren to do the same, are consider cultural troglodytes. The Christian has now been marginalized by a culture that forces its beliefs in our schools, on the entertainment media, and are now even forcing us to "grow up" so we can all share the same bathrooms while shopping at Target. Is there anyone among us today who will listen to God's Word?

We have had opportunity to review Luther's words in regard to the Ministry of the Keys in Bible Class. In the course of this study, the subject of "excommunication" was discussed as we examined Jesus' words in Matthew 18, the passage often used as the "formula for Church Discipline." *If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.' If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector. I tell you the truth, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.* Mt 18
Note carefully that what is commanded here is that God's Word be proclaimed and that those who hear it would listen. For over and over again, Jesus stresses that the one to whom God's Word is given is to LISEN. And over and over again, Jesus says that *if he refuses to listen ... treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector.*

“Not listening” would characterize the people to whom Jeremiah would be sent. May none of us ever fall into that category!

The question before us is this: are we a blessed nation? Is there any left in this nation who still listen to the Word of God? The answer to this lies with a people who not only listen to God’s Word, but who will work and fight for the preservation of the truth.

God gave Jeremiah this message for Judah and the people of Jerusalem: *When you tell them all this, they will not listen to you; when you call to them, they will not answer. Therefore say to them, 'This is the nation that has not obeyed the LORD its God or responded to correction. Truth has perished; it has vanished from their lips.* Some 135 years earlier, Judah’s relatives from the north, the Kingdom of Israel, had been brutally beaten and destroyed by the cruel Assyrians. To this day, the descendants of those who lived there continue to terrorize the world with mass killings and beheadings of Christians. Israel also had been warned by God to listen to his Word, but when the prophets came to them they despised the truth of what was said. Now the lesson would have to be learned by Judah and Jerusalem.

Will that be a lesson that our nation will have to learn before we respond to God’s Word and consider it to be the truth? Will we recover from what we have become as a once great nation? Today those congregations still faithful to the truth and purity of the Gospel are growing smaller as more and more who call themselves Christians are impatient with studying the truth. They consider it to be more sophisticated and loving to be “non-denominational” which in reality is saying, “I am a Christian who doesn’t get hung up on what is the truth of the Bible.” How much longer will the Lord allow this to go on?

About 500 years before God told Jeremiah to give this warning to the nation of Judah, good King Solomon built and dedicated the Temple that Nebuchadnezzar would soon destroy. The Bible says: *When Solomon had finished the temple of the LORD and the royal palace, and had succeeded in carrying out all he had in mind to do in the temple of the LORD and in his own palace, the LORD appeared to him at night and said: "I have heard your prayer and have chosen this place for myself as a temple for sacrifices. "When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command locusts to devour the land or send a plague among my people, if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.* 2 Chr 7 Knowing the hearts of people, it wasn’t a matter of “if,” but “when,” God would have to chastise his holy people. Yet the Lord graciously set before his Church on earth a gracious promise: *, if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.* He doesn’t speak of those who have rejected the truth, but those who know God’s truth and will fight for it. If you and I will humble ourselves, with repentance and pray, not only will God forgive us our sins, but will heal our land.

It’s up to us who listen to God’s Word and who through faith preserve it in repentant hearts to save this blessed country! On Memorial Day we rightly take time to remember those who gave their lives as the heroic defenders of the Constitution of this Country, and in doing so, have been the Lord’s agents of preserving this land and its freedoms. But there are also those who pick up the sword of the Spirit which is God’s Word, and through faith in Jesus and his Word, offer our prayers for God’s grace and mercy to be directed toward us and our children.

It’s up to us to petition our Lord, for it is the people of God’s Church toward whom God promises his grace and every blessing, all for the sake of his Word and promise. We pray, “God bless America!” Amen.