

The First Sunday after Michaelmas (Trinity 19) – Pr. Faugstad sermon
Jeremiah 1:1-10: “The Lord Fills Our Senses with His Word.”
October 4/5, 2025 | Saude, Jerico, & Redeemer Lutheran Churches

In Nomine Iesu

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Heavenly Father, You delivered Your Son for our offenses and raised Him for our justification. Grant that we may also trust in the word of forgiveness, which You have given Your pastors *and our fellow Christians* to proclaim, that clinging to Your good and gracious promises, we might be brought to eternal life; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen. (*Luther’s Small Catechism*, CPH 2017, p. 321)

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. (Rom. 1:7, etc.)

The sermon text for today is written in the first chapter of the Book of Jeremiah. We read selected verses in Jesus’ name:

The words of Jeremiah, the son of Hilkiah, one of the priests who were in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin, to whom the word of the LORD came in the days of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah, in the thirteenth year of his reign. It came also in the days of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, and until the end of the eleventh year of Zedekiah, the son of Josiah, king of Judah, until the captivity of Jerusalem in the fifth month. / Now the word of the LORD came to me, saying, “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations.” Then I said, “Ah, Lord GOD! Behold, I do not know how to speak, for I am only a youth.” But the LORD said to me, “Do not say, ‘I am only a youth’; for to all to whom I send you, you shall go, and whatever I command you, you shall speak. Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you, declares the LORD.” Then the LORD put out His hand and touched my mouth. And the LORD said to me, “Behold, I have put My words in your mouth. See, I have set you this day over nations and over kingdoms, to pluck up and to break down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant.”
(ESV)

These are Your words, heavenly Father. Sanctify us by Your truth, Your Word is truth. Amen. (Joh. 17:17)

In Christ Jesus, who has given authority to men to proclaim His powerful Law and Gospel to lead sinners to repentance and faith, dear fellow redeemed:

Imagine that someone offers you a job, and the primary requirement for the job is that you tell the truth. But if you tell the truth, your colleagues will hate you, the authorities will hate you, and the people you most want to help will think you are crazy. A number of people will threaten you with death. You will be thrown into prison for a while. You will warn everyone about what will happen if they don’t change course. But no one will listen, and everything you predict will come true. Would you take that job?

What I described is similar to what happened to Jeremiah, a prophet of the LORD. But the LORD did not exactly *offer* him his job; He *told* him what he would do. The LORD had prepared

Jeremiah's work for him even before he existed. The LORD said, *"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations."*

Jeremiah immediately questioned his qualifications: *"I do not know how to speak,"* he said, *"for I am only a youth."* To assure Jeremiah of His presence and power, the LORD engaged several of Jeremiah's senses. The Word of the LORD came to him, so we assume he was able to hear the voice of God. Then *"the LORD put out His hand,"* which Jeremiah was presumably able to see. And then the LORD *"touched [his] mouth,"* which he was able to feel. All of it was to assure Jeremiah that he would not have to come up with the words to speak; the LORD would give him the words.

"Behold, I have put My words in your mouth," He said. He also told Jeremiah what those words would accomplish. Jeremiah would be placed *"over nations and over kingdoms."* But the words he spoke would not be welcome. These words from God would have power *"to pluck up and to break down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant."* Four of the effects in the list are destructive—pluck up, break down, destroy, overthrow, and only two are constructive—build and plant.

The task for Jeremiah would certainly be difficult. The consequences for his faithful work were outcomes he would want to avoid. He grieved for his people who had gone after foreign gods (Jer. 8:18-21). And he grieved that he was attacked for telling the truth. He cried out bitterly: *"Woe is me, my mother, that you bore me, a man of strife and contention to the whole land! I have not lent, nor have I borrowed, yet all of them curse me"* (15:10).

So why did the LORD put him through such trials and troubles? It seems unfair that Jeremiah would have to experience these things. But let's look at it from a different perspective. The people of Israel had forsaken the LORD. They worshiped false gods from the king down to the common people. The prophets and priests told everyone what they wanted to hear and were especially greedy for goods and money. The people were doing everything God said they should not do and what He warned would lead to their destruction.

But instead of sending enemies to smash down their gates and destroy the people of Israel, the merciful LORD sent them prophets. He sent the prophets to expose their sins through His Law and call them to repent of their wrongs. He also delivered a message of promise through the prophets, that if the people turned back to the LORD, He would bless them and give them peace and prosperity.

So the work was difficult for Jeremiah, but it was done out of God's love for His people. He did not take pleasure in Jeremiah's suffering. He took pleasure in seeking and saving His lost sheep. Jeremiah was right—he did not have the strength inside himself to do this work. But the LORD promised, *"I am with you to deliver you."*

We do not face the same intense trials that Jeremiah did, where it is basically us against the whole world. But we certainly experience challenges to our faith and the pressure to go along with what we know is wrong. It is always difficult to tell the truth when we know the truth is not welcome.

And there have certainly been times that we kept our mouths shut when we should have spoken up and confessed the name of Jesus. We took the easy path that did not risk our popularity or our position instead of standing for what is right. Like Jeremiah, we have hidden behind our weaknesses and essentially told the Almighty God to find someone else who is more qualified.

But the task to speak God's Word faithfully is given to each one of us. 1 Peter 3 says, *"Have no fear of [those who oppose you], nor be troubled, but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect"* (vv. 14-15). But how can we stay prepared to do this? How can we make sure we are ready to speak when challenges and questions come our way?

We are prepared in the same way that Jeremiah was—through the powerful Word of God. The LORD has not visibly reached out and touched our mouth, but He did call us to the waters of Holy Baptism, where a pastor touched us with the sign of the cross and with water joined to His Word. That Baptism showed that before He formed us in the womb He knew us. He chose us to be saved and brought us the salvation Jesus won by baptizing us into His death and resurrection (Rom. 6:4).

In our Lord's institution of the Sacraments and His calling of men to be pastors, it is clear that He wants to fill all our senses with His Word. Besides the touch of the Sacraments, He wants us to see those visible Sacraments in the Divine Service and read the Word of God in worship and through regular devotions at home. He wants us to hear the Word preached and join in confessing and singing His truth. He wants us to taste the gifts of His Supper as He gives His true body and blood along with the bread and wine for the remission of our sins.

Our sense of smell is perhaps the least engaged of our senses in the Divine Service, though some Christians are used to the smell of incense lifting heavenward with their prayers. We might smell the candles or fresh flowers, but we might especially think of breathing in the Word like we do oxygen and then breathing out our prayers and praises to God.

The Word of God does not dull our senses like a drug or some kind of anesthetic. The Word of God wakes us up; it keeps us alert. The world sees it the opposite way. It says that the teaching of the Bible holds us back from true happiness, from reaching our full potential, from being who we were meant to be. The world agrees with the people of Israel who at times ignored Jeremiah and at times hoped for and worked toward his death.

Though Jeremiah often felt despair and wondered if his preaching was doing any good, the Word of God never returns to Him empty. It accomplishes His purpose and succeeds in the thing for which He sent it (Isa. 55:11). His Word is living and active (Heb. 4:12), and it produces a living and active faith in His people.

The Lord still calls men like Jeremiah—pastors who also struggle with doubts and weaknesses—to preach His holy Word. He calls you to gladly hear and learn this Word. The Lord speaks it for your life and salvation. He wants you to turn from your sin in repentance and to believe that all your sins are forgiven through the blood of Jesus.

By your inherited sinful nature, you were like the paralyzed man brought before Jesus – unable to do anything to help yourself. But Jesus looked with compassion on you and said, *“Take heart, My child; your sins are forgiven”* (Mat. 9:1-8). That is a delightful Word. It is like music to the ears, like light for the eyes, like honey to the taste, like a sweet-smelling aroma, like a gentle and comforting touch. No matter how often you have ignored the Word of God, taken the easy path, or hidden behind your weaknesses, Jesus says to you: *“Your sins are forgiven!”*

This is a message for the whole world, for all sinners. This is what the LORD calls pastors to preach publicly in the congregation. This is the message the LORD calls every Christian to proclaim privately in their day-to-day lives, announcing the forgiveness of sins to your family members, friends, co-workers, and other neighbors. This Word of God’s grace is not always met with joy. Some take offense at the suggestion that they have sins that need forgiving. Others question whether sinners like you and me have any business speaking forgiveness to others.

But despite the criticisms, we know that it is not our Word we speak, but the LORD’s. He has put His Word in our mouths, and not just in our mouths – in our ears and eyes and noses and hands. **The Lord Fills Our Senses with His Word**, so that we are ready to speak His Word faithfully.

This is no job to run away from, and we do not need to be afraid to do it, *“for I am with you to deliver you, declares the LORD.”* Through His Word that we speak, our gracious Lord will continue to carry out His soul-saving work for others just as He has for us – the work of plucking up and breaking down, destroying and overthrowing, building and planting.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, forevermore. Amen.

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