

Pentecost 4 – June 28, 2020  
Text: Jeremiah 28:5-9  
Theme: Oh Hananiah. Would that it were so.

**Hananiah should have been the patron saint of TV Evangelists, entertainment news and politicians. He knew what the people wanted to hear and he gave it to them. They had grown weary of Jeremiah's gloom and doom. Jeremiah was a colorful prophet and he just wouldn't stop no matter how much the people groused about his preaching of death and destruction. In the chapter preceding our Old Testament text, Jeremiah had taken to wearing a yoke around his neck like the yokes with which people hitched oxen to the plow. This was not Jeremiah's idea but God's command. In Jeremiah 27 we hear,**

**"Thus the LORD said to me: 'Make yourself straps and yoke-bars, and put them on your neck.'" Jeremiah was to announce that God was making Judah a slave to Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon. Anyone who opposed Babylon would be destroyed. That was not the heroic, patriotic speech that anyone wanted to hear. Imagine if God told me to proclaim that because of our idolatry, lack of love and failure to forgive, the United States would now be a vassal state for China and anyone who opposed China would be destroyed. I think that message would not be well received. We want to think everything is going swell. We like to think that God is pro USA, and when Jesus returns he will be marching down Ardmore Avenue and staging the big return from Trinity's parking lot just like the 4<sup>th</sup> of July parade in normal years. But that is simply not the case.**

**God is not pro USA, or pro Lutheran or pro anything else in this world. God is our Redeemer not our cheerleader. We struggle within the mire of sin and sorrow and he pulls us out of the muck using all manner of tools. In the case of Jeremiah's people, they had fallen into idol worship and God had put up with it for longer than he wished. Instead of worshipping faithfully at his temple, they were burning sacrifices to Baal and Asherah and any number of other made up gods that human beings had dreamed up. They did this for a couple reasons. First worship at the idol temples was often more fun than at God's temple. Think of the difference between a formal dinner and casino night at the VFW. Second, they could never count on God to do what they wanted him to do. He simply would not take any direction, so they tried to cover their bases with other more malleable gods. Does that sound familiar?**

**How many people skip worship because it's not entertaining enough? Worship is boring. I don't get anything out of it. It's too early in the morning. Sunday is my only day to sleep in. It's too hard getting the kids ready. We're out of town on the weekends.**

**How many people skip worship because God isn't doing what they want? I'm not worshipping a God who allowed COVID19 to kill half a million people. I'm not worshipping a God who says I'm a poor, miserable, sinner. I'm not worshipping a God who tells me how I have to live my life.**

**How many people get angry when told that Covid19, racial hatred and murder hornets are just products of living in a sin-fallen world and**

**there is nothing we can do to stop any of it? There is always some plague befalling us. That is what Satan does. He enjoys life being miserable for Christians. And, yes of course, if we were all perfect Christians, perhaps much pain could be avoided but even if you were perfectly righteous and holy, you couldn't stop a tornado or an earthquake. And, while you can keep curing diseases, have you noticed that there is always a new one to take the last one's place? Small pox, then polio, Hong Kong Flu, HIV, Swine Flu, COVID19.**

**We're always hearing that if we just do this or just think that, everything will be fine. If we just apply logic to the situation, everything will be good. But it won't. No one gets out of this alive. You are going to die. God says very clearly in Psalm 139,**

**"Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them." The number of the days of your life is already determined. You will die unless Jesus returns first so the question is not what can I do to live longer, but what kind of quality of life do I want? And, more importantly, where do I want to spend eternity?**

**We're no different from Jeremiah's people listening to the prophet Hananiah telling them what they wanted to hear. There are still false prophets all around us. You are free to conduct your life any way you want, as long as you accept and embrace whatever we tell you to accept and embrace. In order to be a good person, you have to follow our rules, which are much better than those old Bible rules. We celebrate the**

**diversity of your sin because when you live sinfully, it means we can too. Oh would that it were so Hananiah, but saying it doesn't make it so. The Hananiah's of the world can shout what they feel to the rooftops and it won't make it right. They can get celebrities to take up their cause and it will still be wrong. They can scream and cry and call Biblical Christians every name in the book and they are still false prophets. There comes a time when God has had enough and it does not surprise me when people suffer for their opposition to his Law.**

**Why are children given the choice of worshipping God or doing something else? Why are there people who are actively seeking to take away the Church's non-profit status, and limit the Church's influence in society? Why are the congregations of Christians all over this country shrinking while they are growing in places that take the Word of God seriously, like Ethiopia and Russia? There are consequences in this life for being a false prophet and listening to false prophets.**

**Israel was exiled to Babylon and Hananiah died. God said to him, "Behold, I will remove you from the face of the earth. This year you shall die, because you have uttered rebellion against the LORD."**

**Opposing God and ignoring his Word has severe consequences. Jesus said that anyone who does not bear his cross is not worthy of him. Implied in that statement is that there will be crosses to bear. Life in this world is not now and never has been easy for God's people, but that does not mean that we should ever accommodate to this world. Knowing that Satan roams and influences the people of the world, we are called to be**

**counter-cultural. We are called to stand in the face of everything that is ungodly and proclaim his truth.**

**Jesus calls us to bear his cross. Implied in that statement is also the promise that we who bear his cross will also receive the reward of that cross. Nothing we suffer in this world will compare to the glory of heaven. Jesus died on that cross for our sins and he empowers us to bear that cross; empowered by his Word and the Sacraments. Never give in. The Hananiahs of this world will yammer at you constantly but you have the true Word of God. Read it, study it and know who the true prophets are and who the prophets of this world are.**