Jeremiah 26:4-6 Say to them, “This is what the Lord says: If you do not listen to me and follow my law, which I have set before you, and if you do not listen to the words of my servants the prophets, whom I have sent to you again and again (though you have not listened), then I will make this house like Shiloh and this city an object of cursing among all the nations of the earth.”

I think to grasp the marvel of Jeremiah’s life as a prophet it is most helpful to have an understanding of the history of the people of God at this time. Jeremiah began his ministry during the time of King Josiah, the last of the Godly kings of Judah. After 18 years, good King Josiah dies and at this point a radical change takes place in the people of Judah and Jeremiah’s life. No longer was Judah God-fearing but almost immediately with the death of Josiah the people reverted back to idolatry and godlessness. As a result of this, Jeremiah’s life became one of persecution, harassment, hardships and eventually death.

Yet Jeremiah’s ministry did not stop. He was still called on by the Lord to be his spokesman and to proclaim God’s Word. It must have been a difficult task. It must have been a frightening task. The reason I say it must have been frightening is because of the words found in the text before us. Here is the Lord calling Jeremiah to go into the Temple at Jerusalem, a temple now found to have false idols and false worship going on, and to proclaim the Lord’s message to the people. As the Lord is instructing Jeremiah he says directly to him, **“Tell them everything I command you; do not omit a word.”**

Do you know that this is the only time this phrase is found in God’s Word? As I contemplated this I was reminded of what God had said to Jeremiah when Jeremiah was first called as a prophet. In 1:17 the Lord says, **“Get yourself ready! Stand up and say to them whatever I command you. Do not be terrified by them or I will terrify you before them.”** Isn’t that interesting? Even at the beginning of the work of Jeremiah, when things were good and the King supported and helped him, Jeremiah is reminded not to be afraid. Now, in 26:2, 18 years later, when things have gone exceedingly bad, the Lord seems to be reminding Jeremiah not to compromise, not to skip over, not to omit anything that the Lord wants him to reveal and say. No doubt, God does this as an encouragement to Jeremiah, to keep Jeremiah focused on the job at hand, to keep Jeremiah’s fear at bay so that he might proclaim exactly what the Lord wanted his people to know. And I want you to know that despite all the difficulty and hardship Jeremiah had to face, not once did Jeremiah ever omit a word of the Lord.

How I wish such would be true in today’s religious world. How I wish that those who take positions in the church, yes, those who are pastors and leaders, would remember such words like these addressed to Jeremiah (**“Do not omit a word.”**) or the words found recorded in Hebrews 13:17, **“Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account.”** That passage is speaking to those who lead in God’s church. God is point blank telling such people that teaching the truth and wonder of God is of utmost importance so much so that they will give an account to God for the souls under their care!

Yet how is it that you have pastors in churches that don’t even believe God’s Word to be God’s Word? They deny the physical resurrection of Jesus, they deny most of the miracles and wonders reported in the Bible, they deny even the very creation of God. You have religious leaders all over who omit this, skip that, excuse here and ignore there. What frightens me more, is that you have people who attend those churches and who think this godlessness is truth! What shall we do? I think we will just stick to God’s Word. I think we will grasp that what Jeremiah faced, the pressure to please people, the stress of danger if you don’t do and say what the people want is still something that goes on today.

Today is the Sunday of Last Judgment! Today we are reminded of what is at stake for the souls of the world. Today, we contemplate the importance of not omitting anything that the Lord declares. Our theme will be: **THIS IS WHAT THE LORD SAYS. 1st. Listen! 2nd. Follow! 3rd. The Lord will judge!**

How is it that the people of Judah, yes, these people who had been called to be the special people of God could so easily and readily turn away from the Lord? The answer is really rather simple. The answer is sin. These people have failed to do what God has called upon them to do. That is one of the definitions of sin. It is a sin of omission. Now, what did they fail to do? They failed to listen to what the Lord has said. They failed to hear, to take in, to digest, to contemplate, to grasp the great and awesome marvel that God’s Word is. Yep, it is simple…they failed to listen to the Lord.

Why? Was what God was saying so hard to understand, so out of reach or so ridiculous that it seemed worthless? What God had revealed so far was His law which exposed the reality of sin and the trouble that sin causes. That was his moral law. What God had given to these people was also his civil law to govern them as a nation, laws designed to cause fairness and guide a people striving to live as a nation. What God had also provided was his ceremonial law which pointed to the coming Savior, the hope of eternal life and salvation, the revelation of his grace, mercy and love. And yes, though you learned by the law that you were a sinner yet you also learned from the law the hope of the promised Savior and the forgiveness that God offered through and in that Savior.

But evidently all of that seemed silly to the people of Judah. They would rather worship the Baals and the false gods of the Canaanites. They would rather believe that sacrificing their children to Molech, working at rituals of work righteousness, or that what they did and how they did it was the difference between life and salvation. In other words they rejected the faith of God for the plans and religion of work righteousness. All because it seemed better, seemed more fun, seemed to meet their needs, and seemed to satisfy what they felt was best and good in matters of salvation.

They failed to listen. Today we have the same problem in Christianity. Why are there so many denominations? Why is there such a divergence in what churches do and say? Because even today man we has a tendency to fail to listen to the Lord. To fail to hear what he says. It is not that God’s Word is unclear or “can be interpreted in so many ways.” It is because even today we fail to listen, yes, to hear, take in, grasp, digest, and contemplate the Word of the Lord our God!

But that is not the only difficulty. Please note the other accusation that God has Jeremiah throw at his people. God said to them, **“If you do not listen to me and follow my law…”** Here is the second problem people have. They don’t follow. They don’t work at obeying, at walking the walk and talking the talk. They don’t work at putting into practice what the Lord says is best and right. They don’t want to believe and be counted worthy of the Kingdom of God.

How sad. Here was a people whose history is filled with God acting for them and with them. A history of miracles and wonders, awe and grace. And do you want to really know how sad this not following is on their part? Please note that prophets like Jeremiah, Isaiah, Micah to Malachi were all men who preached against the terrible godlessness of these people. They trashed the Jews for their false faith time and time again. Yet you find these men and the Words God gave them in the Bible of the Jews. It’s called the Old Testament. How can you include what these men say in your Bible as God’s Word and yet totally and absolutely ignore what they say and write? Hypocrisy at its best. Failure to follow what the Lord says!

Again we still have the same problem today. We hear what God says and then we ignore it. We have this book called the Bible, Old and New Testaments, the very voice of God among us and yet we proclaim this part wrong, that part false, over here is something just silly and old fashioned and, worse yet, all the revelation of Jesus they boil down to “he is an example of how to live right.” Failure to follow and believe the Lord God. Failure to grasp and understand the gift of salvation and eternal life won by Jesus for us. A willingness to take the Lord’s mina’s and hide them in the ground because in truth, they believe the Lord hard and without love. Failure to follow.

By the way, what is so hard about what the Lord says? He tells us of our sin and then He shows us how He sent his Son to be our Savior from sin. Do we see Jesus on the cross and think nothing of it? Do we hear him cry out in agony as he suffered for our sins on that cross and the best we can do is shrug our shoulders and say, “Yeah.” Do we see that empty tomb and the risen Jesus and remain unmoved by its message and the joy it is? Do we take the Gospel message, that joyful preaching of Jesus as our Savior by grace through faith and then ignore it, living like what Jesus did has absolutely no impact on our life? That, dear people, would be a failure to follow.

You know, we just had a Voters’ meeting and I heard a few things that border on this point. One of them was that we are an old and dying congregation and what is being done about it? Yes, what are you doing? Are you inviting your neighbors? Are you sharing the message of Jesus and actively looking to encourage people to come and hear the message of Jesus and his love? Are you actively being a light to this dark world or are you just complaining? The other thing I heard was “we have this debt, look at our debt!” Well, what are you doing about it? Have you upped your offering? Do you encourage others because of Jesus to up theirs? Do you still spend more money on your vacations and hobbies than you give to the Lord? And what are you doing to help the large portion of members who give nothing, to step it up and to put Jesus first? Or are you just complaining? Following Jesus, as our Epistle reading tells us and as our Gospel reading reveals may involve suffering and hardship, hard work and trust in the power and marvel of God’s Word as displayed in Jesus. Are you following?

Finally there is the last part of what Jeremiah is told to say. It is clearly a threat from the Lord. He says, **“Then I will make this house like Shiloh and this city an object of cursing among all the nations of the earth.”** There is the threat of the Lord. Shiloh was once a place where the Tabernacle and later on a simple Temple to the Lord God was found. It was there for over 400 years. But now, Shiloh was a wasteland. It had been destroyed and deserted during this period and had been for quite some time. Has it ever dawned on you that even in today’s world, Jerusalem is a city despised and cursed by most of the world? Dear people, here is the very threat of God, the reminder that He is the Lord and as such He is the One who will judge, yes, judge the living and the dead, the believer and the unbeliever.

Which will you have, the gracious, compassionate God who sent His Son to be your Savior or the god you invented and follow in your own mind? Would you rather have the God who tells us our salvation is free and sure because Jesus died and rose from the dead or do you want to rely on your own works and goodness, your own strength and power? That’s where it stands.

Or Epistle reading (2 Th 1:5-10) put it this way, **“This will happen when the Lord is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power.”** Clear words that the Lord will be our judge.

Or what of our Gospel reading and the Parable of the Minas? It concludes, **“I tell you that everyone who has, more will be given, but as for the one who has nothing, even what he has will be taken away. But those enemies of mine who did not want me to be king over them—bring them here and kill them in front of me.”** The Lord is our Judge.

So again, the gracious and compassionate God who sent His Son to be our Savior or the god you invented and follow in your own mind? Jesus and salvation free and sure or hell? A God of love who is worthy to be heard and followed or you reject him as King? Me, I chose Jesus. I chose to hear and follow, to believe and trust in the God of grace and love as found in Jesus. He is everything always. Amen.