

Denounced

Proper 7

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Jer. 20:7-13

Grace, peace, and mercy be to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

President Donald Trump has only been in office a few months, and yet there has been newspaper article after newspaper article written concerning the events of his presidency, those involved, and President Trump himself. We won't debate whether he makes a good president or a poor one. Our focus is on some of the things being said, whether or not you agree with them.

President Trump recently ousted FBI Director James Comey. Since that time, negative things have been said in the papers in both directions. There is a term for this, though my memory can't recall whether the term itself was used in any of the articles. The term is "denouncing."

To denounce is "to condemn or censure openly or publicly." There are other meanings to the term, but this is one we will focus on for our sermon.

Getting back to the president and the former FBI director, Comey has denounced President Trump's action in taking him out of office. At the same time, President Trump has and continues to denounce the need for an investigation into his campaign race and following victory.

The methods have been different—from Tweets discovered and leaked by the news to statements from the President or former director's mouths. Each of these were denouncements.

This morning, we heard about others who wanted to denounce someone, and how that someone wanted to denounce his own position. We turn to our Old Testament text from Jeremiah chapter twenty.

Verse 1

Jeremiah begins our text lamenting his position as a prophet: "O Lord, you have deceived me, and I was deceived; you are stronger than I, and you have prevailed. I have become a laughingstock all the day; everyone mocks me. For whenever I speak, I cry out, I shout, 'Violence and destruction!' For the word of the Lord has become for me a reproach and derision all day long. If I say, 'I will not mention him, or speak anymore in his name,' there is in my heart as it were a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I am weary with holding it in, and I cannot."

With his opening words, Jeremiah declares that it was the Lord who made him a prophet—it was not his decision. He portrays it as though the Lord had spoken gently to him and led him into a trap.

After our text last week, one might wonder how often pastors feel the same way even today. A pastor begins his call with a "honeymoon" period, but eventually find that sin does indeed still exist in this world—yes, even in the Church. Depending on the severity of the situations with which he is faced, he may lament as Jeremiah did. All pastors are sent out as sheep among wolves, may very well be dragged before governors and leaders even in these modern times, and will be maligned in various ways because they are part of God's household. Yet pastors are not the only ones who find that sin still thrives today. Everyone in the world feels its effects, including the members of the congregations of the Christian Church.

There are times when God's Word shines light on a sin in a family, and God's Word drives a sword between continuing in the sin and not, and if the sin is not repented of, it drives a sword through the family itself. Jesus tells us in our Gospel text, "Brother will deliver brother over to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death, and you will be hated by all for my name's sake."

But how far has it gone for you? Have you bled for your faith? Have you been beaten for your faith? Jeremiah throughout his time as prophet did both.

Yet no matter how he may have wanted to, and even tried to, keep God's Word in, Jeremiah found that he could not. His heart was consumed by the fire of the Spirit encouraging him to do as God had commanded him. Jeremiah had attempted to denounce his vocation, but he had failed.

Verse 2

Despite his inability to refuse the call, Jeremiah did not have it easy. Speaking against Israel and saying that a captivity was coming was not what those around him wanted to hear. Jeremiah wrote: "For I hear many whispering. Terror is on every side! 'Denounce him! Let us denounce him!' say all my close friends, watching for my fall. 'Perhaps he will be deceived; then we can overcome him and take our revenge on him.' But the Lord is with me as a dread warrior; therefore my persecutors will stumble; they will not overcome me. They will be greatly shamed, for they will not succeed. Their eternal dishonor will never be forgotten."

Jeremiah felt threatened on every front. Not only his enemies were denouncing him, but also his close friends. He felt that they were all laying traps for him so that if he should be proven wrong, he would be put to death.

Even President Trump or former director Comey don't know what it was like for Jeremiah. They may be denouncing each other in the papers, but their allies, friends, and family have not turned against them.

But what a friend Jeremiah had in God, and that we have in that same God, Jesus Christ our Savior! Well do we sing "Do thy friends despise, forsake thee? Take it to the Lord in prayer. In His arms He'll take and shield thee; Thou wilt find a solace" in the friend that we have in our Lord Jesus.

Jeremiah felt like his friends were turning on him—and they may very well have been. In the same way, Jesus had His friends and allies desert Him and denounce Him. We have a Savior who knows what we are going through, no matter what it may be. Our God has taken on human flesh and has felt the pain and sorrow of friends abandoning Him, and even His own family trying to prevent Him from speaking the Word. In Mark chapter 3, it says that "the crowd gathered again (to hear Jesus), so that they could not even eat. And when his family heard it, they went out to seize him, for they were saying, 'He is out of his mind.'"

Jesus was denounced on all sides; and ultimately He was publicly denounced by His own Father for your sake, and for your forgiveness. God the Father may not have spoken, but Jesus made it clear "'Eli, eli, lema sabachthani?' that is 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' (Matt. 27:46b)" Jesus was denounced so that you might be publicly accepted by God the Father when Jesus comes again to judge.

Verse 3

The enemies of God, Jeremiah stated rightly, would have their "eternal dishonor...never be forgotten." But in our Lord Christ Jesus, you will have eternal honor, for His sake. This is how Jeremiah concludes our text:

"O Lord of hosts, who tests the righteous, who sees the heart and the mind, let me see your vengeance upon them, for to you have I committed my cause. Sing to the Lord; praise the Lord! For he has delivered the life of the needy from the hand of evildoers."

Despite Jeremiah's frustrations and the denunciations from those living with him, Jeremiah trusted that the Lord would deliver him. Even before he was out of his challenging situation, he wrote by faith "Sing to the Lord; praise the Lord!"

No matter what trial you may be going through at this point in your life, or even in an upcoming trial which has not yet showed its ugly face, you can do the same. You can know that you have deliverance in Christ Jesus, your Lord and Savior.

You know that Jesus never fails those who trust in Him. Not in the Old Testament. Not in the New Testament. He won't today. And He won't in the future. Denunciations can fly all over the news, and even among friends, but they will never fly because God has failed a believer, not even one in dire straits. That is why Jeremiah and you can proclaim that God, in and through Jesus Christ, is worthy of all praise and singing. In Jesus' Name. Amen.