

Pastor Geoffrey R. Boyle
13th Sunday after Pentecost
18 August 2013
Grace-Trinity Lutheran Churches, Wichita
Luke 12:49-53

In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit

It first happened with Micaiah.
That is, he was the first with the reputation.

Prophets have a way with making enemies with kings.

It's not their fault, of course, they're just saying and doing as they've been told.
But Kings don't always like the truth—and neither do we.

We'd much prefer to be lied to, to be told that everything's "okay—"
whatever makes us feel good.

Micaiah's enemy is King Ahab.

Ahab and Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, were forming an alliance against Syria.

But before they march off, Jehoshaphat, in good conscience, asks to

"Inquire first for the word of the LORD" (1 Ki 22:5).

So Ahab calls together some 400 of *his* 'prophets'—false prophets, of course—
who all say with greater fervor than the next,

"Go up, for the Lord will give it into the hand of the king" (22:6).

Surely, Jehoshaphat pleads, there *must* be another.

Well, of course there is, Micaiah, but Ahab hates him because, as he says,

"he never prophesies good concerning me, but evil" (22:8).

That was Micaiah—a prophet of the Lord, rejected for speaking what's true, simply because it's unpleasant.

Then came Jeremiah.

Just after today's OT reading we hear,

"Thus says the Lord:

*If you will not listen to me, to walk in my law that I have set before you,
and to listen to the words of my servants the prophets whom I send to you urgently,
though you have not listened,
then I will make this house like Shiloh,
and I will make this city a curse for all the nations of the earth."* (Jer 26:4-6)

As a result of Jeremiah delivering this word to the priests and the prophets and all the people near the Temple walls Jeremiah was arrested and threatened with death.

"You shall die!" they exclaimed, *"This man deserves the sentence of death, because he has prophesied against this city."* (Jer 26:8, 11)

Then, after Micaiah and after Jeremiah, there was Jesus.

He also spoke what His heavenly Father gave Him to speak.

And for kings and princes, and all those who refuse to be weak or poor, the words of Christ aren't always easy words.

We hear from today's Gospel:

*"I came to cast fire on the earth, and would that it were already kindled!
I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how great is my distress until it is accomplished!
Do you think that I have come to give peace on earth?
No, I tell you, but rather division.
For from now on in one house there will be five divided,
three against two and two against three.
They will be divided,
father against son and son against father,
mother against daughter and daughter against mother,
mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law."* (Lk 12:49-53)

No one wants to hear this—not you, not me, not the Church, not the world; no one!

Obviously this sort of talk doesn't sell—

just take a look at the Spiritual life section of any local book store.

It's all "*Your Best Life Now*"

and "*The Purpose Driven Life*"—

none of it is fire, death, and destruction!

None of it, that is, except Jesus and His prophets.

And look at what it got them—all three were tossed in prison; and Jesus was nailed to a cross.

Why?

Couldn't they have just been a bit kinder?

More winsome?

Gentler?

Too often we refuse to speak the hard word because we fear rejection.

We fear weakness and humility.

We fear hatred and loneliness.

We fear pain and imprisonment and death.

Repent.

Our Lord has hard words to say.

And hardest of all that one I just said: *repent*.

It's so hard, in fact, that we can't even do it no matter how hard we try.

We must be repented, turned, knocked on our rear-ends and then picked up again.

We must be killed with our Lord's hard word of the Law
and then raised back to life again by His delicate word of the Gospel.

That's repentance and it's His work, not ours.

That's how our Lord works—by His Word.
He divides with His cutting Word of the Law.
He sets families against each other—
not because He delights in family strife—far from it!—
but because that's what the truth does among a bunch of sinners.

When that word of Law came from Micaiah it was, of course, ignored by Ahab.
And yet, the Word did it's work and Ahab was cut to the heart—
literally in his case, he was stabbed between the breastplates of his chink armor at war.

And Jeremiah's word of the Law did it's work too.
The Temple was destroyed just like Shiloh.
Not one stone was left upon another.

And then there's the word of Jesus—it does its work too.
Jesus said there was a baptism He had to undergo—
a baptism of fire.

This baptism began with water at the hand of John the Baptizer,
and was completed on the cross with blood at the hand of Pontius Pilate.

There it was finished.
That was the day all the prophets peered into in the heavenly council.
That was the fulfillment, the reality, the truth—
and all the words of the prophets witnessed to this truth.

And so it goes today.
All the words of the Church are words of this cross.

Some are hard words: *repent*.

And yet, it's from this cross that our Lord begins His work of repentance *for you*.
It's there your sins are forgiven.
It's there your debt is paid.
It's there your weakness is made strong by the weakness of your Christ.

For here our Lord speaks also His life-giving delicate words of the Gospel.
And those words of life attach themselves to the waters of baptism,
to the bread and wine of Holy Communion,
and to the hands of the pastor as he lays them on your head saying,
"I forgive you."

Micaiah and Jeremiah were just the messengers.
And so is your pastor.

It's Christ who speaks,
Christ who heals,
Christ who forgives—
and He does it all for you with His strong Word.

And so we pray,
“*Lord, keep us steadfast in Your word.*” Amen.

In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit