

EPIPHANY 4 C**“God Has Put His Words Into Our Mouths”****Jeremiah 1:4-10**

“Don’t you dare put words in my mouth!” We might say this in an argument when we don’t want our position to be misrepresented. Those who try to put words into our mouths are not looking out for our best interests and they are usually wrong about our viewpoint. But this passage is case where it is good to have another put words into our mouths. They are God’s words for His people to speak. By His Word and Sacraments, God puts His word of life and salvation into our mouths so that we can tell others of Jesus Christ as our Savior from sin

I. We Object to God’s Call**A. “I Am Not Qualified”**

This text does not say how God calls Jeremiah, but His plans for the prophet were prior to his birth (for we have life in His sight even then). God’s purpose for our lives predates our birthdates. What a loss to the world the sin of abortion causes, even though our politicians celebrate this procedure. God has set aside Jeremiah to be His spokesman, sharing, speaking, and proclaiming His Word to His world. Jeremiah’s response is common in the Bible and typical in our lives. “You have the wrong person, Lord; I’m not the one.” Like Moses at the burning bush, Jeremiah says, “I do not know how to speak.” Obviously he can talk, but he thinks that he does not know the right words. He has no degree in public speaking. He is not a student of theology. How could he represent God to the people around him? We have the same objections today. “I can’t talk about Jesus to others. I do not know Bible or the faith well enough. I don’t feel comfortable inviting others to worship with me.”

B. “I Am Afraid to Fail”

Jeremiah then doubles down on his objection. “I am only a youth.” He is not a child, probably about 20 years old, but he thinks that he is too young to be taken seriously by others. Jeremiah fears ridicule, rejection and even harm. So also we fear being laughed out of school for standing up for the Christian faith when others act ungodly. We fear being shunned at work as religious freaks because worship is more important to us than sleeping in or playing sports on Sunday mornings. We fear being rejected by family and friends if we share our faith with them or ask them to join us in seeing Jesus present for us through His word. God calls us to speak His Word, but, like Jeremiah, we have our own objections to God’s calling.

II. God Answers Our Objections

A. “I Make You Qualified”

How do we expect God to respond to our objections? “You’re right, what was I thinking? You can’t speak for me. I will go to the next guy.” Was God wrong about Jeremiah being His prophet after He had set him apart from mother’s womb? No! Was God wrong when He claimed us as His own in holy baptism? No! Are we on our own qualified to speak for Him? No! But it is not about us. God does not call the equipped. He equips those whom He calls. He makes us qualified.

In a scene difficult for us to picture, God reaches out and touches Jeremiah’s mouth to put His words there. From now on Jeremiah’s words are God’s words. In a less dramatic, but just as effective, way, God puts His words into our mouths. This happens through God’s Word and Sacraments. In baptism the Father makes us His chosen children. Jesus places His name upon us. The Spirit’s dwelling happens in our lives. The Bible is God’s written word for us to use. We don’t have to make up the script, write the story or come up with a sales pitch about Jesus. The Bible tells us that He is the Son of God who lived perfect human life, then died on a

cross sacrificially in our place and rose from the dead in victory over sin, death and the devil for us. He gives us strength for our life now and confidence for life eternally. He is coming back to claim us for His forever home to live with Him in a reunited body and soul. The Lord's Supper is the body and blood of Jesus which gives forgiveness for our life of sin and nourishment for our life of faith. It is also a preview of the heavenly banquet to come.

B. "I Will Be With You"

How about the other objection, the fear of rejection? "Do not be afraid." God said this to Abraham and Moses, also in the Old Testament and to Mary and Paul in the New Testament. "I am with you to deliver you." God promises His personal protection of His prophet and certain assurance of his rescue. Granted, God does not promise Jeremiah that he would be successful as God's spokesman. As we read through his book, we learn that most did not listen to what he had to say. God does not promise us success either, but you might remember from last week's Gospel, Jesus Himself was not immune to opposition on account of His preaching. The devil is working hard, unbelief is all around us and rejection is unavoidable. That is ok because God only calls us to be faithful to His word. Though others may not listen, we don't give up. We are never failures when we speak God's word about our Savior.

III. God's Mission Is Our Calling

A. God's Law Tears Down Sin

When God puts His word into our mouths, His mission in His world becomes our mission for our lives. That word of God is first of all law that tears down sin. It won't always be a pretty sight when speaking God's word. We are sinful people living in a rebellious world. There are times when our lives stink. That stench often

is of our own doing. At those times we need someone to say to us, or we need to say to someone else: “clean up your ungodly act.” To call sin what it is and to call someone to repentance, is not our opinion or judgment. It is God’s word that needs to be spoken. God’s law attacks our sinful security. It destroys our self-righteous attitude. It may even cause us to hit rock bottom spiritually.

B. God’s Gospel Builds Up Sinners

God has a purpose in tearing down sin. He wants His gospel, His good news for us in Jesus, to build up sinners. Only when we see ourselves as sinners will we then welcome the forgiveness of sins that Jesus Christ has won for us. We have the privilege of speaking God’s words of forgiveness to those who are sorry for their sins. We have the joy of sharing God’s words of hope with those who are overwhelmed by despair. We have the opportunity of telling God’s words of salvation to those who are in fear of hell’s condemnation. Those words of God’s gospel, put into our mouths by His Word and Sacraments, come through our mouths into the lives of those around us.

Conclusion

I should have said this at beginning. It is my disclaimer. This message only applies to those of you whom God has claimed in holy baptism. What’s more, it only applies to those of you who deal with sinners who need Jesus on daily basis. If God has not called you to be His own in baptism, and if the people around you are perfect all the time, then never mind, you can forget the previous fifteen minutes. But if you are a baptized child of God and a forgiven sinner in Jesus Christ living among sinners who are in need of Jesus, God’s word is for you. He has placed it in your mouth to use in Jesus name. Amen.