

## Fighting Temptation: Like Savior, Like Servant!

A sermon based on Jeremiah 26:8-15 – ***“But as soon as Jeremiah finished telling all the people everything the Lord had commanded him to say, the priests, the prophets and all the people seized him and said, “You must die! <sup>9</sup> Why do you prophesy in the Lord’s name that this house will be like Shiloh and this city will be desolate and deserted?” And all the people crowded around Jeremiah in the house of the Lord.***

***<sup>10</sup> When the officials of Judah heard about these things, they went up from the royal palace to the house of the Lord and took their places at the entrance of the New Gate of the Lord’s house. <sup>11</sup> Then the priests and the prophets said to the officials and all the people, “This man should be sentenced to death because he has prophesied against this city. You have heard it with your own ears!”***

***<sup>12</sup> Then Jeremiah said to all the officials and all the people: “The Lord sent me to prophesy against this house and this city all the things you have heard. <sup>13</sup> Now reform your ways and your actions and obey the Lord your God. Then the Lord will relent and not bring the disaster he has pronounced against you. <sup>14</sup> As for me, I am in your hands; do with me whatever you think is good and right. <sup>15</sup> Be assured, however, that if you put me to death, you will bring the guilt of innocent blood on yourselves and on this city and on those who live in it, for in truth the Lord has sent me to you to speak all these words in your hearing.”***

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

She stared at us for a few seconds with a grin on her face. A couple days later, she giggled as we both reacted with the exact same response. You see, with my mom here, Becky’s been enjoying seeing the similarities in some of our characteristics and also learning how I’m just like my dad in other things, like how my mom and I were eating lunch the same way, focused on eating and staring straight ahead, or how Mara said something cute, and my mom and I in tandem went, “Mmmhmmm.” My mom even revealed that I eat my soup just like my dad, with lots of crackers, which he learned from his dad, who learned it from his dad, and so on.

They say imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, so, there you go, Mom. You’re welcome! I’m guessing I’m not alone here. There are probably things you do or say - certain quirks you have – where someone who knows you and your family would see it and say, “Some things don’t change.” “You’re just like whichever relative it is.” Or, you know the saying, “like father, like son.”

Did you maybe get a similar sense as you listened to our 1<sup>st</sup> Lesson for this morning? To quickly summarize, Jeremiah was told by God to speak an unpopular message to a people who were unwilling to turn from their sins. The religious leaders heard it and determined that Jeremiah needed to die for his blasphemy and his lies. They seized him, brought him before the people, who were equally as incensed at his words. They clamored for him to change his tune, and Jeremiah refused, so then they clamored to the government officials for Jeremiah’s life. Yet, Jeremiah simply trusted in God to watch over him, even if it meant his innocent death.

And you're thinking of...maybe Good Friday, Jesus' claim to be God, the Jewish leaders seizing him and sentencing him to death for blasphemy, inciting the crowds to cry, "Crucify," Pilate trying to get Jesus to change his tune, Jesus refused, even though it meant his certain death. Do you see the comparisons? This is greater than a "like father, like son" imitation. This is "like Savior, like servant."

Right? Jeremiah was rejected here because he did not tell the people what they wanted to hear. Though threatened with death, he was resolute in his mission and faithfully proclaimed the Word of the Lord, and even so far as, in the face of what seemed to be sure and certain death, to invite these hostile people to repentance and mercy from the Lord of free and faithful grace. Like Savior, like servant.

Would that describe you too...like Savior, like servant? Are you, Christian, willing to stand up for what the Bible says, even in a hostile environment?

Now, I think we can all agree the environment we're living in is nowhere near as hostile as it was for Jeremiah or for Jesus. Sure and certain death because we believe and teach the truth of God's Word doesn't seem to be in any of our immediate futures.

Yet, there are two ways we get to be like Savior, like servant when we look at this account in Jeremiah.

The first is what happens with you when God calls you to stand firm in your stand and your outward testimony on unpopular moral issues.

The one I think we come back to time and time again because it's so prevalent in our society today – even in our community – is homosexuality. And I understand if you're a little torn on this topic; nowadays, it's become how many of us don't know someone who's LGBTQ? And the struggle is (or, at least, I hope it is), how can I be loving and supportive of them and yet still be faithful to God's Word? But, do you understand the rub? We can love them (and ought to love them). We can care about them as individuals, but we can't be supportive of their lifestyle choice. We have to call it a sin because God's Word clearly calls it a sin. And you know what, that's loving.

Again, that's hard, especially knowing that you'd be called a bigot, maybe lose a friendship, maybe even be in the line of some hateful fire from people who will accuse you of being hateful. But doing all that is what God expects from his servants. Are you, Christian, willing to stand up for what the Bible says, even in a hostile environment?

Or, another tough one today, living together outside of marriage and having sex outside of marriage. Again, we know what God's Word has to say on both of those fronts. And we also know where our society stands...you're weird if you don't, everyone's doing it, it's not a big deal. Try telling God sexual sins aren't a big deal. Our Savior had no problem confronting the Gentile woman at the well who was working her way through men, as if they were nothing more than the flavor of the week.

And yet still, where do you stand? Again, it's tough, especially when God's Word stands in such strong opposition to what's normal today. Maybe it's that you made that mistake yourself – are you willing to even call it - premarital sex or premarital cohabitation – a sin? How can I be comfortable judging someone else when I did the same? Or, it's not my business. Are you, Christian, willing to stand up for what the Bible says, even in a hostile environment?

OR, the other way we get to be like Savior, like servant is how we handle the most unpopular message? You know what it is? The gospel.

It's unpopular with others because it goes against the grain of the most basic human want...to be in control of our own eternal destiny.

And it's just as unpopular with us because it's the only message that saves and our sinful nature despises it and will stop at nothing to make us uncomfortable in our faith in Jesus and get us to avoid talking about our Savior, no matter what the excuse has to be. Too often, it's a far cry from servant Jeremiah, who, in the face of seeming death, actually encouraged his opponents, ***"Now reform your ways and your actions and obey the Lord your God. Then the Lord will relent and not bring the disaster he has pronounced against you" (Jeremiah 26:13).*** And Jesus, over and over again, stresses how you are his witness, to share the life-giving message of the gospel with others. So, again, are you, Christian, willing to stand up for what the Bible says, even in a hostile environment?

Even if it's been one time that you've given in to temptation and haven't been willing to stand up for what the Bible says, it's one time too many that you haven't been like Savior. And, knowing me, it's been many more than one time for you. And here's the reality Jesus lays out, ***"Whoever acknowledges me (and you could add, my Word) before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven. But whoever disowns me (and, again, my Word) before men, I will disown him before my Father in heaven" (Matthew 10:32-33).***

And that should be us. Right, if we're unwilling to take a stand for Jesus and for the truth of his Word, and if we're not going to be like Savior, like servant, then why should he stand up for us. He shouldn't. He ought to rightly give up on us and disown us before his Father and leave us to our eternal future we deserve.

But instead, Jeremiah's words echo from the mouth of God to you and me today, ***"Now reform your ways and your actions and obey the Lord your God. Then the Lord will relent and not bring the disaster he has pronounced against you" (Jeremiah 26:13).*** He calls for us to repent, to turn from our sinful ways and our sinful attitudes and turn to Jesus...because in Jesus, we see, not the "like Savior, like servant" likeness. No, in Jesus, we see "like Father, like Son."

Can you see it? God says he wants all people to be saved. Jesus did, too. Look again at our gospel. How did Jesus put it? ***"Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings" (Luke 13:34).*** Even to the Pharisees, Jesus' greatest critics and enemies, he wanted them as part of his heavenly family.

And he wants the same with you. For us who aren't willing to be servants like our Savior, he wants us under his wing.

So, he came here to make that happen through his life, death, and resurrection. Jesus synced his will and his mission with his Father's will and mission. Even the hardships Jesus faced throughout his ministry, the temptations to sin, the continual challenges on his person and his authority by the Pharisees and other religious rulers, the well-intentioned but horribly misplaced encouragements from even his own disciples to avoid talking about his death and even going up to Jerusalem to die...all that wasn't enough to deter Jesus from his work - living perfectly for you, dying an innocent death on the cross for you, rising triumphantly from the grave for you.

None of that was enough to stop Jesus from standing up for you and saving you from sin, the devil, and eternal death...because, like Father, like Son. And so, undeterred and filled with love, Jesus lived, and died, and rose to not only save us but to make us part of God's family...to be put into the position where we can be servants of our Savior.

And now, that same love - God's unconditional love – is the force that compels us to face ridicule and hatred in order to proclaim his truth. Right, like Savior, like servant!

Jesus was unafraid to approach the difficult topics in his preaching and in his interactions with sinners, making it clear to people, like the adulterous Canaanite woman at the well and deceitful Zacchaeus who was stealing money from people...Jesus made it clear what they were doing was sin, yet those were sins Jesus died on the cross to pay for.

Can we take the same approach? Will we speak the truth – calling sin “sin,” but also speak the truth in love – sharing how Jesus died to forgive that sin?

Jesus longed (and he still longs) to gather more under his wings and into his family. As his servants, we long for that, too.

You know there's still room under his wings, and all the struggles we might endure in this life in our standing up as servants of Jesus and being willing to share the gospel of Jesus with others, in the end, they'll be worth it when more chicks are gathered under his wings.

And finally friends, when we're feeling discouraged or threatened, there's room under those wings for us as well. I would encourage you, sometime, to check out a video of a hen gathering chicks under her wings when danger's near. It's comforting to know Jesus does the same for us, his servants. It's empowering to know that's there so that we can boldly stand up for Jesus with our lives and our message. Like Savior, like servant.

You know, sometimes it can be a little embarrassing when someone points out something you say or do and say, “You're just like your father or mother.” Maybe you've felt that way, too.

Being a servant like our Savior, who was like his Father? There's nothing embarrassing about that. There's nothing embarrassing about standing up for the truth of God's Word. There's nothing embarrassing about truly being loving with our actions and our words.

We've seen the example in Jesus. We've seen the results in our lives. And now, like Savior, like servant. We will love and live as servants of our Savior...like our Savior. Amen.

***To view other sermons, click [here](#).***