

Rev. Paul A. Hottinger

Ways Not to Listen to the Truth Seventeenth Week in Ordinary Time Friday,
August 1, 2014 8:15 AM **Jer 26:1-9; Mt 13:54-58** St. Alphonsus Liguori, bishop,
doctor (The covenant is what God expects: justice, fairness in all relationships among the
people, with outsiders and aliens, and with other nations.)

We have two cases in today's readings of a prophet being rejected for his message.

In the case of **Jeremiah his message was rejected because it was negative.** He warned the people that their devotion to God was useless because it was not matched by deeds. They were not living the covenant, and yet they came to the temple of the Lord. They believed that the temple of the Lord would save them. But that's not the consistent message of the Old Testament. The message is this: when you live by the covenant of God, God will protect you; but if you don't live by the covenant, then God will deliver you to your enemies. And that is exactly what was happening at that moment. **Israel was being delivered to its enemies because it was not keeping the covenant.**

Later the Pharisees would interpret this not keeping the covenant in all kinds of legalistic ways: not keeping the sabbath or not doing this or that. But that's not what was originally intended. You can find what was originally intended if you read the Book of Exodus, even the Book of Leviticus. It's full of awareness of **what God expects: justice, fairness in all relationships among the people, with outsiders and aliens, and with other nations.** When this was lacking, God said, well, then if you are not going along with the covenant, then I'm not going along with the covenant. **The importance of Christ in the New Testament is that Jesus goes along with God's covenant totally,** totally giving himself in service. Therefore insofar as anyone follows Christ and unites to Christ through Baptism and the actions that follow Baptism, living in the Spirit of God, in the Spirit of Jesus, one can be assured of the

covenant's protection. But the same must also be true for those who do not follow Jesus and live by his ways. They are repudiating the whole idea of God's promises.

Now in the case of Jesus here in the synagogue, he is not being rejected because he is scolding the people or threatening the people or warning the people. In fact, he is doing mighty deeds and speaking wisdom. There is a different issue here. People say, "Well, where does he get all this? We actually know his family." This is a matter of **familiarity breeding contempt. It's not so much the message as the messenger here in Jesus' case.**

But both of them are very descriptive of people and **how people do not want to listen and will find ways not to listen to the truth.** If the truth is uncomfortable, well, then we don't have to listen to it. In fact, **let's attack the one who speaks the truth. That's the case of Jeremiah. In the case of Jesus, well, we really don't like the messenger.** He is too familiar. He is too ordinary. He is too much like us; we don't want to listen to him. We want someone extraordinary. We want someone exotic. All these different ways people have of deflecting what they really need to listen to, and therefore fail to do what they really need to do.