

Grace: God's undeserved love for each and every one of us. Mercy: God forgiving us our sin for the sake of His Son, Jesus Christ. And peace: Peace of heart, peace of mind, peace with God. All of these are yours from God, our Father, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

The portion of Scripture before us today is found in the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah, the twenty-third chapter, beginning at the twenty-third verse:

"Am I a God at hand, declares the LORD, and not a God far away? ²⁴ Can a man hide himself in secret places so that I cannot see him? declares the LORD. Do I not fill heaven and earth? declares the LORD. ²⁵ I have heard what the prophets have said who prophesy lies in my name, saying, 'I have dreamed, I have dreamed!' ²⁶ How long shall there be lies in the heart of the prophets who prophesy lies, and who prophesy the deceit of their own heart, ²⁷ who think to make my people forget my name by their dreams that they tell one another, even as their fathers

forgot my name for Baal? ²⁸ Let the prophet who has a dream tell the dream, but let him who has my word speak my word faithfully. What has straw in common with wheat? declares the LORD. ²⁹ Is not my word like fire, declares the LORD, and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?

Heavenly Father sanctify us by the truth; Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear Redeemed by the Blood of the Lamb,

“He sees you when you're sleeping, he knows when you're awake. He knows if you've been bad or good, so be good for goodness sake.” - Santa Claus is Coming to Town

“Every breath you take, every move you make, every bond you break, every step you take... I'll be watching you. Every single day, every word you say, every game you play, every night you stay, I'll be watching you.” - The Police/Sting

“Ever since the government's spying scandal was exposed, sales of the novel '1984' have

jumped 6,000% on Amazon. Yeah, ‘1984’ shows how scary it would be if society tracked everything you do. And if you want to read it, just buy it on a website that tracks everything you do.” - Comedian

In preparation for a sermon on the omnipresence of God, I have a lot of material to choose from in popular culture references. Whether it is the idea that society continues to perpetuate about an Elf on a Shelf (who apparently watches you from a different spot everyday), or a movie about how someone’s entire existence can be taped and shown on television for the world to watch (Truman show) to the above quotations; there is, in the world today, a general concept and understanding about the notion of omnipresence. Think of how easy it is to have a camera turned on at home that you can watch on your smartphone while you are in a trip to China. The ability to watch and see so much is at our very fingertips, and still it is no where near the omnipresence of God. And instead of mocking God, like all of the wimpy attempts in

our culture do, we need to remember to ***Speak His Word Faithfully.***

In our text, Jeremiah is telling us what God would have us know. Jeremiah is being a prophet extraordinaire, he is relaying the Word of God exactly as it should be done. As opposed to those around him, Jeremiah is staying faithful to God. The prophets of Jeremiah’s day would come before the children of God and proclaim that they had a dream... and then they would tell their dream and it would turn people away from the worship of the one true God. Instead of prophesying for God and proclaiming His perfection, His love, and His kindness; they proclaimed themselves and all that they could and would do.

Just think about the previous examples. Now not that Sting ever claimed he was God as he sang his song, the other two examples can kind of hit home. When we look at Santa Claus, I cannot believe how many children think that Christmas is about him and not about Jesus. It is a falsehood perpetrated by generations of people who are turning away from Christ. No,

not the idea that a man named Saint Nicholas lived, but rather that the celebration of Christmas is about him and not about Jesus. And this is a myth that is still taught today. I can remember Christmas time last year, while doing a devotion with little children and asking them who was born on Christmas and hearing Santa Claus... I was frustrated, and these were the kids who were in our Christian Day Care.

Or consider the government, now I don't want to start an argument, but as churches have become fewer and fewer in number and in revenue and in assistance, the government has grown. In the Bible it says that a believer is supposed to care for his family, even parents, as they get older... and yet more and more it is the government that is doing it. The church is supposed to care for the poor, and more and more it is the government that is doing it. More and more the government is doing the job of the church... and we are okay letting them.

You see, at times we even feed into the notion that maybe Santa Claus and the government should be this all seeing, all knowing, all

encompassing entity. But they are not. There is only one omnipresent force and that is God, and any other who claims this mantle is a liar. Any person who feeds into this notion, is lying. Any person who helps others believe this, takes an attribute of God and gives it to a created thing... and thus makes a false god. And we all do it. We take this wonderful attribute of God, the fact that He is everywhere always, and we attribute it to the government, or a man in a red suit, or an elf, or to some other thing... and we forget that only God is truly omnipresent. We are like the prophets of old who proclaim that we had a dream, and we steer little children and others away from the one true God and point them to another god.

You see, the omnipresence of God is not an attribute to be taken lightly. With the understanding that God is everywhere always, that can be a very frightening thought. God is with you... when you yell at your spouse. God is with you... when you decide to steal from work. God is with you... when you don't proclaim His glory and defend His name. Any time we sin, God is with us. Not in a way that

He is helping us sin... but He is there. He sees our sin and it grieves Him. As Johann Gerhard states, “Quite often we commit things in darkness that we would be terrified to do in the presence of an honorable man. But God is present everywhere. No one can hide anything from Him nor deceive Him. Therefore what happens that His presence does not strike terror in us and does not instill a cautious concern to avoid sin?”

And yet, on the other hand, the fact that God is always with us is a very comforting fact. Though we sin much, the Holy Spirit is the one who leads us to repentance. God leads us to repent of our sins, to turn away from our sins. Not because we are able to in and of ourselves, but solely because of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ who promised His disciples (Mt. 18:20), “For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them.” Though He knew He was living His life on earth in order to redeem all mankind. To pay for our sins on the cross. To be our Savior from sin, hell, and death. This is what Jesus did, and what Jesus had in mind when He told His disciples that He is with

them, when they come together in His name. Or just before Jesus’ Ascension into heaven, Jesus told His disciples (Mt. 28:20), “And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

Jesus made sure that His disciples knew that He was always there for them. Jesus made sure that His disciples knew what He had done for them and He did not want them to forget about it. So God, through one of His holy writers, informed his church to (Heb 10:25), “not neglect to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.” God wants His children encouraged to come together to hear His Word, to be in His presence, and to be in His house.

And it is in His house that we will hear true prophets and teachers proclaiming the Word of God to His faithful children. Children who know that Christ is always with them. Maybe not in a “I can reach out and touch Him” sort of way, but in a supernatural, “God is everywhere always,” sort of way. In a way that we will

never fully understand, but in a way that is true because God promised it.

And, yet, in a way, God is here with us. He is present in a very “I can reach out and touch Him” sort of way. When we partake of the Lord’s Supper, we are receiving the very body and blood of Christ for the forgiveness of our sins. In the Words of Institution, and the Words of Christ Himself, “Take and eat, this is my body which is given for you, do this in remembrance of me... Take and drink, this is my blood of the new covenant which is shed for you for the remission of all of your sins, do this as often as you drink of it in remembrance of Me.” The forgiveness that He won as He hung on the cross on Calvary, and the forgiveness that He distributes to us in the Lord’s Supper, in our Baptism, and in His Word.

As Johann Gerhard notes, “If God, who is present everywhere, is with us graciously, we can say with David out of the genuine confidence of our heart: ‘God is our refuge and strength, our helper in the troubles that have

found us. Therefore we shall not be afraid if the earth be moved from its place and the mountains be hurled into the heart of the sea... The Lord of Hosts is with us. The God of Jacob is our invincible fortress...’ God is pure light, pure joy, and pure blessedness. Therefore whoever has God graciously present with him has light, joy, and life.”

And we too know that God is always with us. According to Jesus’ own words (John 14:15-17), “If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.”

This, because Jesus Christ has spoken it, we know to be true. The Father created us, the Son redeemed us, the Spirit sanctifies us. God is always with us. God is there when we fall down and injure ourselves. God is there when we lose a loved one... to comfort us. God is there when we are hurting... to be with us. God is always

there, always with open arms, always wanting us to be His.

Dear friends in Christ, God is always with us. This is an attribute that is only true of God, and it is an attribute that we can never fully explain. I will not stand up here like a false prophet and begin to place limits on God and on what He can do just so my reason feels better; I will not be like a false prophet who gives the attribute of omnipresence to anyone or anything other than God; I will not speak faithlessly about God and about His Word because it will win me friends in the world. God is with us always and He would have us be faithful to Him, not to another God.

As we live life in this world, we can know that God is always with us. We can be assured that He will never leave us. We can know that God is always taking care of us. And we in turn, can be like Jeremiah of old and proclaim His divinity to the world. We can make sure that His attributes of omnipresence (all-present), omnipotence (all-powerful), and omniscience (all-knowing) are given to Him alone and not

another. I pray that each and every one of us is able to be like the mighty prophet Jeremiah and that we would live out our lives *speaking His Word Truthfully and Faithfully*.

Thanks be to God. Amen.