***Jeremiah 26 In the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, this word came from the Lord, saying, 2“Thus says the Lord: ‘Stand in the court of the Lord’s house, and speak to all the cities of Judah, which come to worship in the Lord’s house, all the words that I command you to speak to them. Do not diminish a word. 3Perhaps everyone will listen and turn from his evil way, that I may relent concerning the calamity which I purpose to bring on them because of the evil of their doings.’ 4And you shall say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord: “If you will not listen to Me, to walk in My law which I have set before you, 5to heed the words of My servants the prophets whom I sent to you, both rising up early and sending them (but you have not heeded), 6then I will make this house like Shiloh, and will make this city a curse to all the nations of the earth.” 7So the priests and the prophets and all the people heard Jeremiah speaking these words in the house of the Lord. 8Now it happened, when Jeremiah had made an end of speaking all that the Lord had commanded him to speak to all the people, that the priests and the prophets and all the people seized him, saying, “You will surely die! 9Why have you prophesied in the name of the Lord, saying, ‘This house shall be like Shiloh, and this city shall be desolate, without an inhabitant’?” And all the people were gathered against Jeremiah in the house of the Lord. 10When the princes of Judah heard these things, they came up from the king’s house to the house of the Lord and sat down in the entry of the New Gate of the Lord’s house. 11And the priests and the prophets spoke to the princes and all the people, saying, “This man deserves to die! For he has prophesied against this city, as you have heard with your ears.” 12Then Jeremiah spoke to all the princes and all the people, saying: “The Lord sent me to prophesy against this house and against this city with all the words that you have heard. 13Now therefore, amend your ways and your doings, and obey the voice of the Lord your God; then the Lord will relent concerning the doom that He has pronounced against you. 14As for me, here I am, in your hand; do with me as seems good and proper to you. 15But know for certain that if you put me to death, you will surely bring innocent blood on yourselves, on this city, and on its inhabitants; for truly the Lord has sent me to you to speak all these words in your hearing.” 16So the princes and all the people said to the priests and the prophets, “This man does not deserve to die. For he has spoken to us in the name of the Lord our God.” 17Then certain of the elders of the land rose up and spoke to all the assembly of the people, saying: 18“Micah of Moresheth prophesied in the days of Hezekiah king of Judah, and spoke to all the people of Judah, saying, ‘Thus says the Lord of hosts:***

***“Zion shall be plowed like a field, Jerusalem shall become heaps of ruins, And the mountain of the temple Like the bare hills of the forest.” 19Did Hezekiah king of Judah and all Judah ever put him to death? Did he not fear the Lord and seek the Lord’s favor? And the Lord relented concerning the doom which He had pronounced against them. But we are doing great evil against ourselves.” 20Now there was also a man who prophesied in the name of the Lord, Urijah the son of Shemaiah of Kirjath Jearim, who prophesied against this city and against this land according to all the words of Jeremiah. 21And when Jehoiakim the king, with all his mighty men and all the princes, heard his words, the king sought to put him to death; but when Urijah heard it, he was afraid and fled, and went to Egypt. 22Then Jehoiakim the king sent men to Egypt: Elnathan the son of Achbor, and other men who went with him to Egypt. 23And they brought Urijah from Egypt and brought him to Jehoiakim the king, who killed him with the sword and cast his dead body into the graves of the common people. 24 Nevertheless the hand of Ahikam the son of Shaphan was with Jeremiah, so that they should not give him into the hand of the people to put him to death.***

We’re with Jeremiah this evening and he now faces death for speaking the Truth of God. Those that speak Truth often face persecution, even unto death. It was true in the days of Jeremiah, true in the says of Jesus, and true today. There are martyrs dying around the world for Faith in Jesus. We must be willing to give our all for the One who gave all for us.

 Verse 1 *In the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, this word came from the Lord, saying.* Chapter 25 last week was in the 4th year of Jehoiakim. Chapter 26 is at the beginning of Jehoiakim’s reign. The point of this chapter is not history, but to teach us that there is a cost of discipleship and we must count that cost. Luke 14:33 Jesus says - *So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple.*

 Verses 2-6 *Thus says the Lord: ‘Stand in the court of the Lord’s house, and speak to all the cities of Judah, which come to worship in the Lord’s house, all the words that I command you to speak to them. Do not diminish a word. 3Perhaps everyone will listen and turn from his evil way, that I may relent concerning the calamity which I purpose to bring on them because of the evil of their doings.’ 4And you shall say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord: “If you will not listen to Me, to walk in My law which I have set before you, 5to heed the words of My servants the prophets whom I sent to you, both rising up early and sending them (but you have not heeded), 6then I will make this house like Shiloh, and will make this city a curse to all the nations of the earth.* Stand in the great courtyard of the Temple, also called the court of Israel or the outer court where the common people brought their sacrifice. Speak to all the cities, which suggests strongly that Jeremiah is speaking during a festival that would have drawn people from all over Judah to this outer court. Speak all the words I command thee, diminish not a word. We must never cow down to fear, or favor, or flattery when we declare the Truth of Jesus Christ. We speak faithfully the whole counsel of God. Perhaps everyone will listen – God already knows that they will remain obstinate and hard of heart, but this demonstrates to Jeremiah God’s justice, mercy, and holiness, giving every opportunity for the people to repent. After this event in the inner court, God will wait another 6 years before Jehoiakim is taken into captivity, and another 17 before Zedekiah is captured. He is long suffering.

 Verse 7 *So the priests and the prophets and all the people heard Jeremiah speaking these words in the house of the Lord.*The false prophets and disobedient priests and all people heard. This takes place in the outer court which is part of the house of the Lord.

 Verses 8-12 *Now it happened, when Jeremiah had made an end of speaking all that the Lord had commanded him to speak to all the people, that the priests and the prophets and all the people seized him, saying, “You will surely die! 9Why have you prophesied in the name of the Lord, saying, ‘This house shall be like Shiloh, and this city shall be desolate, without an inhabitant’?” And all the people were gathered against Jeremiah in the house of the Lord.*

*10When the princes of Judah heard these things, they came up from the king’s house to the house of the Lord and sat down in the entry of the New Gate of the Lord’s house. 11And the priests and the prophets spoke to the princes and all the people, saying, “This man deserves to die! For he has prophesied against this city, as you have heard with your ears.” 12Then Jeremiah spoke to all the princes and all the people, saying: “The Lord sent me to prophesy against this house and against this city with all the words that you have heard.*This holds the idea that Jeremiah is seized immediately by these false prophets and disobedient priests as an enemy of the government. They now threaten him with death for his obedience to the Word of God. Shiloh was destroyed by fire and left uninhabited. The people would have known this and been appalled. The kings representatives were likely present at the gathering in the great court, being members of Sanhedrin. They gathered at the entry gate, a place of judgement in Jerusalem. This is very like the way the chief priests, Pharisees, and scribes gathered to condemn Jesus in Matthew 26.

 Verses 13-16 *Now therefore, amend your ways and your doings, and obey the voice of the Lord your God; then the Lord will relent concerning the doom that He has pronounced against you. 14As for me, here I am, in your hand; do with me as seems good and proper to you. 15But know for certain that if you put me to death, you will surely bring innocent blood on yourselves, on this city, and on its inhabitants; for truly the Lord has sent me to you to speak all these words in your hearing.”16So the princes and all the people said to the priests and the prophets, “This man does not deserve to die. For he has spoken to us in the name of the Lord our God.* Though being told – you will surely die, Jeremiah stays on message. Amend your ways, repent. Jeremiah knows he is in the hands of the enemy – do with me as seems good and proper. He is prepared to die in service to God. But know for certain, killing me will bring innocent blood upon you. Just as spilling the blood of Jesus was the spilling of the most innocent blood, sinless and without blemish. Killing the prophet does not kill the prophecy. Killing the Savior did not kill the Salvation. God will accomplish His plan. The princes and people now say – This man does not deserve to die. They see he is only speaking the word God sent him to speak.

Verses 17-19 *Then certain of the elders of the land rose up and spoke to all the assembly of the people, saying: 18“Micah of Moresheth prophesied in the days of Hezekiah king of Judah, and spoke to all the people of Judah, saying, ‘Thus says the Lord of hosts: “Zion shall be plowed like a field, Jerusalem shall become heaps of ruins, And the mountain of the temple
Like the bare hills of the forest.” 19Did Hezekiah king of Judah and all Judah ever put him to death? Did he not fear the Lord and seek the Lord’s favor? And the Lord relented concerning the doom which He had pronounced against them. But we are doing great evil against ourselves.”*

Then certain elders, these may have been the princes already spoken of, or learned men, and spoke. The case they highlight is Micah, the minor prophet. Micah prophesied against Jerusalem in the time of Hezekiah, saying it would be plowed as a field – meaning the buildings and walls destroyed so nothing would be in the way of a plough. Jerusalem shall become heaps of ruins. The Temple mount will be overrun with briars and thorns, just as a forest. Micah 3:12 records this. Hezekiah did not pronounce a death sentence to silence Micah, but instead heeded the warning. He sought the Lord’s favor that God may relent from this judgement. And we know the result. God sent an angel in the night, slaying 185,000 Assyrians and sending the king home in shame to be slain in his own temple by his own sons. By ignoring, silencing, and killing Jeremiah, these elders recognize that the priests are doing great self harm. Likewise, when we refuse to turn from our personal sin, we do ourselves great personal damage and lose fellowship with God.

 Verses 20-23 *Now there was also a man who prophesied in the name of the Lord, Urijah the son of Shemaiah of Kirjath Jearim, who prophesied against this city and against this land according to all the words of Jeremiah. 21And when Jehoiakim the king, with all his mighty men and all the princes, heard his words, the king sought to put him to death; but when Urijah heard it, he was afraid and fled, and went to Egypt. 22Then Jehoiakim the king sent men to Egypt: Elnathan the son of Achbor, and other men who went with him to Egypt. 23And they brought Urijah from Egypt and brought him to Jehoiakim the king, who killed him with the sword and cast his dead body into the graves of the common people.* Now, we see the opposite. Urijah prophesied words in line with Jeremiah. Jehoiakim sought to put Urijah to death for the prophecy, unlike wise king Hezekiah. Urijah heard, was afraid, and fled to Egypt. He feared man and thereby diminished his words by fleeing Jehoiakim. Jehoiakim sent men into Egypt. It wasn’t enough that Urijah fled the country. Jehoiakim’s pride wanted blood thirsty revenge. These soldiers took Urijah by force and brought him back. There Jehoiakim killed Urijah with the sword. One would think that is vengeance enough, but then Jehoiakim dishonors Urijah’s dead body by not allowing the family the dignity of a Jewish burial for a respected prophet of God, but instead casts the body into the graves of the common people, or among the gentiles, as if Urijah had not been a prophet of God, but a false prophet.

 Verse 24 *Nevertheless the hand of Ahikam the son of Shaphan was with Jeremiah, so that they should not give him into the hand of the people to put him to death.* Ahikam, a highly respected minister under King Josiah, including his brothers, all of the house of Shaphan, highly respected – found in 2 Kings 22:12-14 and Ezekiel 8:11 – stood up and would not give Jeremiah into the hand of the people. God protected Jeremiah and preserved him. He did not flee. God stands with His anointed. He chooses whether to deliver them in this life or to deliver them to heaven to live with Him forever. Blessed be the Name of the Lord.

 And so we leave Jeremiah tonight, as he is delivered by God through the obedient ministers He has called. This will not be the last threats to Jeremiah, yet Jeremiah is faithful and does not diminish the word by faltering, fainting, or fleeing. May God make us all steadfast in our witness and ministry come what may. God stands with those He has claimed. He is strong for us even as we are bold for Him.