*I have heard what the prophets have said who prophesy lies in my name, saying: “I have dreamed! I have dreamed!” How long? Will the hearts of the prophets ever turn back, those who prophesy lies and who prophesy the deceit of their own heart? They plan to make my people forget my name by their dreams that they tell one another, just as their ancestors forgot my name for Baal. Let the prophet who has a dream tell the dream, but let the one who has my word speak my word faithfully. What has straw in common with wheat? - says the Lord. Is not my word like fire, says the Lord, and like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces? See, therefore, I am against the prophets, says the Lord, who steal my words from one another. See, I am against the prophets, says the Lord, who use their own tongues and say: “Says the Lord.” See, I am against those who prophesy lying dreams, says the Lord, and who tell them and who lead my people astray by their lies, and their recklessness, when I did not send them or command them, so they do not profit this people at all, says the Lord.* Jeremiah 23:25-32

*Jesus said: “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honor. “Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say: ‘Father, save me from this hour’? No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour. Father, glorify Your name.” Then a voice came from heaven: “I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.” The crowd standing there heard it and said that it was thunder. Others said: “An angel has spoken to Him.” Jesus replied: “This voice has come for your sake, not for mine. Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.” He said this to indicate the kind of death He was to die.* John 12:23-33

 *A little boy watched, fascinated, as his mother gently rubbed cold cream on her face. “Why are you rubbing cold cream on your face, Mommy?” he asked.*

 *“To make myself beautiful,” said his mother. A few minutes later, she began removing the cream with a tissue. “What’s the matter?” he asked. “Are you giving up?”*

“Lying Through Their Teeth.”

1. 2024 is the presidential election year and in November we will once again decide who our next president, as well as the Senate the and Congress representatives will be. Every time we face the political elections, whether the presidential, congregational, senatorial or local, we, the electorate are exposed to the political campaigns where the politicians, *“lying through their teeth,”* try to convince us that they are running for the office on our behalf, responding to our concerns and to create laws to help us. As gullible as we the electorate have become, we trust them, and cast our votes only to find that what they do when they get elected, is to take care of their own whims and desires, for most of them do not really care about their constituents. I lived through the political campaigns in my native Poland, in Switzerland, in Canada and for the past 22 year here in the United States. Political campaigns are all the same, no matter what country they are being held. I still scratch my head trying to understand why we, as the people are so naive trusting the politicians.

2. As I read the words of the prophet Jeremiah, I see the analogy between our politicians and the false prophets of Jeremiah’s times. They too did make promises, and they did prophesy for the sake of making people to feel good, not necessarily to be the true prophets of God. According to the Scriptures, the true prophet is the one who preaches the message given Him by God, without hesitation calling the lie, the lie and the truth, the truth. A true prophet will not be afraid to call sin what it exactly is: sin. A true prophet is the one who will preach the Word of God without fear of offending those who are not ready to accept it. Jeremiah was such a prophet. The difference between the false prophets, and the true prophets of our times (or any other times) is rather simple: it is found in what they have to offer. We may not call them *“prophets”* anymore, but many of our leaders, whether spiritual or political, are exactly what Jeremiah calls them: *“false teachers and preachers.”* What is so tragic however, is the fact that so many people allow themselves to be led by these false teachers, who preach their own ideas, for their own sakes, rather than to rely on God’s message.

3. Jeremiah was not someone who on the surface would have been a good prophet, he was a shy, young man, rather inexperienced, and not a very good speaker, when God called him. He did however had one important quality - he listen to God and preached God’s message. The people of Judah, just as our society and even to some degree the Church today, have been *“moving”* away from God, for many years, and further and further embracing sin and losing faith. Jeremiah's job was tough: he had to warn the people of their sins, and call them to repentance, and to hear this wasn’t pleasant to the people, so Jeremiah was physically attacked, beaten, thrown into prison and even threatened with death. All because he preached what the people didn't want to hear – the true Word of God. The society today also does not want to hear about *“sin”* and the *“sinfulness”* of the ideas we as the society keep on embracing. People prefer the messages of the *“false prophets,”* who promise comfort even if they are unable to deliver it. The false prophets of Jeremiah days preached their own ideas, they preached the greatness of the nation, they even preached the dreams that they had.

4. A while ago I came across an interesting sermon illustration: *“One Sunday a parishioner came up to his pastor after the service. He was feeling uncomfortable about the sermon, because the pastor had warned against certain sins that he was guilty of. ‘Look here, Pastor,’ he said, ‘do you have to call these things sins? Couldn't you refer to them as 'weaknesses,' or, 'natural human frailties'?’ The pastor took a bottle from a nearby cabinet; the label on it said "poison" in big red letters. ‘How would it be,’ asked the pastor, ‘if I erased the word poison here, and substitute with the word “peppermint,” would this satisfy you?”* The false prophets are the *“editors”* who replace the word poison with *“peppermint.”* God didn't send them, but they pretend that He did. If they had been the true prophets, they would have preached the Word of God, and try to turn the people from their wickedness. Instead, they speak nonsense. They avoid the topic of sin and offer people worthless, but sounding good the *“mambo-jumbo,”* and unfortunately, people love it.

5. There are plenty of such prophets in our world today. If you want a preacher who'll say nothing but the pleasing words and avoid the topic of sin, or if you want to hear a sermon that makes you feel good and tells you what a decent person you are, all you have to do is to turn on your TV, and search for the right channel. You can listen to the political party candidate who will say the words you like to hear, regardless of what this candidate really does. You may follow the social trends which make you feel good, no matter how outlandish these ideas are, and there are plenty of them in our “woke” society, but in the end, you will pay the price of sin, and as the Scriptures says: *“The wage of sin is death.”* Many people don’t want to talk about sin, preferring another, *“nicer”* label, like *“peppermint”* from the illustration I used, pretending that the label is not very important. Our society must consider this: “Gossiping is a sin. Lust is a sin. Changing the Gospel’s message to suit one’s own desires is a sin. Gambling is a sin. Swearing is a sin. Getting drunk is a sin. All these are sins, and not because I say so, but because the Bible says so. The false prophets may look very pious, they may sound as they care about others, they insist on being God send, and they even mention His name frequently, but then they continue to preach and to teach not God's Word, but their own dreams and ideas.

6. There are many preachers who preach about the popular issues, they preach about world peace, they preach about being nice and practicing brotherly love, all these are biblically true and correct, but, without the truth about a sinful nature of mankind, without the message of forgiveness and God’s grace, they just fool themselves and those who follow them. These Church leaders and their followers may eventually not know the difference between their ideas and God’s, but God does, and He says: *"The prophet who has a dream, let him tell a dream; and he who has My word, let him speak My word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat?"* The true prophet doesn't avoid the topic of sin because God's Word condemns sin in all its forms. Preaching on sin may not be popular, but the true prophet doesn't have a choice, it is his or her duty to preach what God wants. Some people may not like to hear about sin not necessarily because they want to embrace it, but because they believe speaking of sin and sinfulness seems too dark, too scary, too depressive, and to hear about sin and punishment is not truly helpful. In some sense this is true, but only if there is no solution offered in one’s preaching and the people hear only about the eternal condemnation. God offered us the solution to this, and it is found in the message of the Gospel, the message of the cross, and salvation through Jesus Christ!

7. Sin is too serious an issue to be dismissed, but if the message about sin consists only of the *“brimstone, hell and fire,”* it is indeed unproductive. Our God is God of Love and forgiveness, and Jesus Christ took care of our sins on the cross of Golgotha. He endured all the punishment that we deserved. He became the *“One and Only Way,”* to satisfy the demands of God’s justice, all we have to do is to simply trust Him.

Apostle John in his writings said: *"If anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He Himself is the payment for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world."*

Jesus had to die on the cross for our sake, and we must follow His teachings rather than the teachings of the false prophets, false teachers, false preachers, who move away from Christ’s message. The dreams and the ideas of the false prophets today, as clever as they may seem, and as logical and even *“biblically sounding,”* are in fact worthless and destructive. They are just a pain killer which masks the true problem, but do not cure it. They may sound and taste good, but have not any healing value. Only Jesus has.