

# Our Sunday Readings

JEREMIAH 20:7-9  
 PSALM 63:2-6,8-9  
 ROMANS 12:1-2  
 MATTHEW 16:21-27

## Get Behind Me

### JEREMIAH 20:7-9

#### **Reading closely**

1. How does Jeremiah speak to God?
2. What's happened to Jeremiah?
3. What must Jeremiah do?
4. How do people respond?
5. What does the prophet want?
6. How does he feel?
7. Why do you think Jeremiah spoke these words for other people to hear?
8. What might life have been like for Jeremiah?

#### **Living the word**

9. What words or actions would make someone a modern-day Jeremiah?
10. Are you comfortable speaking to God like Jeremiah did?
11. How likely are you to act like Jeremiah? Why?

*"...whoever loses his life for my sake will find it."*

### THE FIRST READING

#### **A burning prophet**

Right before these verses Jeremiah tells how he was punished for his prophecies against Israel. Here he laments that God has lied to him, tricked him into warning people of punishments that aren't happening.

God called Jeremiah to point out other people's broken promises, but the result is everyone's pointing out that his prophecies aren't coming true. Jeremiah tries to stop speaking, but God's word within him is too strong.

#### **Like Jesus**

In his commentary on the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah, Peter Ellis writes, "no one in the history of Israel was more like Jesus than Jeremiah. Jesus taught in parables; so did Jeremiah. Jesus was rejected by his own people; so was Jeremiah. Jesus wept for his people; so did Jeremiah. Jesus was scourged, imprisoned, and put on trial for his life; so was Jeremiah." As Jesus looked ahead to his future, the heart-wrenching words of Jeremiah must have been on his mind.

## MATTHEW 16:21-27

### Reading closely

1. How might Jesus have introduced the topic of his coming suffering?
2. What all might Peter have felt about this news?
3. How would you have reacted?
4. Why do you think Peter tried to respond privately to Jesus?
5. What do you think of Jesus' reaction?
6. What might the other disciples have thought about all this?
7. What do you think Jesus expected of his disciples at this point in their time together?
8. What does *life* mean?
9. How well do you think the disciples understood what Jesus told them?
10. What do you think the disciples said and did the rest of that day?

### Living the word

11. What are ways people give up their lives for Jesus and the gospel?
12. How are you trying to save your life?
13. How are you trying to lose your life?

## THE GOSPEL READING

### What's a Messiah?

Last Sunday Jesus told his disciples *to tell no one that he was the Messiah* (16:20). Today we learn why. The disciples expect things from the Messiah that don't match what Jesus has come to do. Jews at that time expected many things from the Messiah. Despite a range of beliefs, no one thought the Messiah would suffer, much less be shamefully and brutally killed.

Although Jesus accepted the title of *Messiah*, he changed its meaning to include rejection, shame, and hardship. Jesus probably preferred the title *Son of Man* because it carried fewer pre-conceptions.

### Rock turned stumbling block

Jesus called Peter *the rock* on which he would build the church (16:18). Now this rock is a *stumbling block*, an obstacle that could trip Jesus up. After calling Jesus *Messiah* and *Son of the living God*, Peter rejects the meaning Jesus gives these titles.

Jesus calls Peter *Satan*. Right before Jesus began his public ministry, Satan tried to lure him down a different path (4:1f.). Now one of Jesus' closest followers unwittingly tempts Jesus.

### Get behind me

When Jesus spoke to Satan in the desert, he told Satan to *Get away*. Jesus tells Peter to *Get behind me*. Jesus doesn't simply want Peter out of his way; he wants him to fall in line. Peter and the other disciples must learn to follow Jesus. Jesus' way is difficult, even frightening, but it leads to *life*.

### Which world do you want?

People want to pursue their own interests. They want to be safe and comfortable. Jesus warns that this approach will protect people's earthly life but cost them their eternal one (vv.24-25).

In verse 26 Jesus asks why we would invest all our time and energy in a world that isn't permanent. Only the hidden world of God's kingdom will last. If we want to be part of God's kingdom, then we've got to spend all our time and energy living the way God wants us to.

When the risen Jesus returns, he'll only bring into God's kingdom those who've followed him down the challenging path of discipleship (v.27).

## PRAYER

by Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow

O Lord, I know not what to ask of you.  
 You alone know what my true needs are.  
 You love me more than I myself know how to love.  
 Help me to see my real needs  
 which are concealed from me.  
 I dare not ask either a cross or consolation.  
 I can only wait on you. My heart is open to you.  
 Visit and help me, for your great mercy's sake. Strike  
 me and heal me, cast me down and raise me up.  
 I worship in silence your holy will and your  
 inscrutable ways. I offer myself as a sacrifice to you.  
 I put all my trust in you.  
 I have no other desire than to fulfill your will.  
 Teach me how to pray. Amen.