Get Behind Me

Our Sunday Readings

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 we hear that Jeremiah was punished for his prophesies 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 story of Jeremiah must have been on his mind.

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**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?

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**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.

**Fall in line**

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 lives but cost them their eternal ones (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).

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**PRAYER**

by Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow

O Lord, I do not know what to ask you. You alone know my real needs, and you love me more than I even know how to love. Enable me to discern my true needs which are hidden from me.

I ask for neither cross nor consolation. I wait in patience for you. My heart is open to you. For your great mercy’s sake, come to me and help me. Put your mark on me and heal me, cast me down and raise me up. Silently, I adore your holy will and your inscrutable ways.

I offer myself in sacrifice to you and put all my trust in you. I desire only to do your will. Teach me how to pray, and pray in me, yourself. Amen.