

TRINITY 12 - 2020

Jer 11:7-9

Rom 12:-1-2

Mt 16:21-27

We are all familiar with the expression, "Between a rock and a hard place." This is where Jeremiah found himself in his life as one of God's prophets. He was reluctant to accept the call to prophecy and while God promised him that he would not let Jeremiah down, Jeremiah's experience was such that he felt deceived by God. "If I speak God's truth, why do people hate me?", is a sentiment very much in Jeremiah's thoughts. Jeremiah knew first-hand the cost of discipleship.

Last week we read of Peter's confession of faith concerning the identity of Jesus. Today we read of Jesus telling his disciples that he was to be put to death and rise again. He wanted the disciples to understand that his mission was not only to announce the presence of the Kingdom of God, it was to offer the sacrifice necessary to enable others to respond by embracing the life of the Kingdom. Jesus also wanted his disciples to be under no illusion about the cost involved in living their lives of self-giving disciples.

Peter reacted negatively to Jesus' words and was accused by Jesus of being like Satan in his temptations in the wilderness, where Satan tempted Jesus to grab worldly power in order to establish his kingdom. The disciples were still thinking in worldly terms – might is right and power means control. Jesus needed them to change their thinking from the view that God's Messiah would be another warrior king like King David, to the view of the Messiah as Isaiah's Suffering Servant. This shift entailed moving from being worldly and self-focussed to be God centred and Christ like. As St Paul reminds us, disciples must develop Christ-like minds which leads to Christ-like actions.

In order to live in the Kingdom, which is living eternal life in the here and now, disciples must focus on the Cross of Jesus. To change the way we think as opposed to how we feel, requires self-denial. I saw a poster once which seemed to promote self-denial. It read, "My tastes are simple, I only like the best." Self-denial is not the self-discipline necessary to lose weight and become fit. It is offering our will to God, allowing no-one or no thing to get in the way. Our Lady said, "Be it unto me according to thy word"(Lk 1:38). Jesus said, "Nevertheless, not my will but thine be done"(Lk 22:42). Even Jeremiah obeyed God's will. In contrast, Some modern politicians say, "I am a loyal Catholic who supports the culture of death and the gender fluid agenda."

Discipleship is Christ centred, Cross shaped and other people focussed. Living this kind of life in our modern culture is not easy. In this culture we are told to affirm ourselves and do what we want so long as no-one gets hurt. Other people's rights are of no consequence if they clash with my rights and the secular doctrine of the day. Even so, people are still fascinated by Jesus as they are fascinated by the scandals of the rich and famous. Being fascinated by Jesus is a far cry from following his demand to "Take up your Cross and follow me."

Transformation from living locked into worldly values to embracing and living heavenly values of love, justice and mercy, begins in the mind. It is a struggle that involves letting go of always doing what we want and not letting prejudice dictate our every move. If we don't know the right choice to make, we must avoid making the choices we know are wrong. Change thinking, and you change behaviour, and remember that Jesus promises that when he returns in the glory of the Father with his angels, each of us will be rewarded according to our lives.

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