

# TWELFTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

## LECTIONARY #94

READING I Jeremiah 20:10–13

### A reading from the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah

**Jeremiah said:**

**"I hear the whisperings of many:**

**'Terror on every side!**

**Denounce! let us denounce him!'**

**All those who were my friends**

**are on the watch for any misstep of mine.**

**'Perhaps he will be trapped; then we can prevail,  
and take our vengeance on him.'**

**But the LORD is with me, like a mighty champion:**

**my persecutors will stumble, they will not triumph.**

**In their failure they will be put to utter shame,  
to lasting, unforgettable confusion.**

**O LORD of hosts, you who test the just,  
who probe mind and heart,**

**let me witness the vengeance you take on them,  
for to you I have entrusted my cause.**

**Sing to the LORD,**

**praise the LORD,**

**for he has rescued the life of the poor  
from the power of the wicked!"**

Jeremiah = jer-uh-Mi-uh

The tone that opens this reading is fearful. Jeremiah is terrified.

Here, with "But," the tone shifts, becoming more hopeful. Jeremiah is talking himself into persevering.

"O Lord" begins a petition, one in which Jeremiah asks to witness the vengeance God will take on his persecutors, a common enough request but nevertheless worth noting.

With this conclusion, Jeremiah shifts into the imperative voice: Jeremiah is speaking to the assembly through these words.

**READING I** This passage is a portion of one of Jeremiah's "confessions," a term scholars use to describe passages of Jeremiah in which the prophet reveals personal anguish and lament to God. This confession follows Jeremiah's encounter with the priest Pashhur, who was one of the Temple priests who persecuted Jeremiah for his prediction of the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians. In hearing Jeremiah's distress, it is important to keep in mind that he never sought the life of a prophet and even, in this moment of lamentation, considers himself deceived by God

to accept this life as a prophet (Jeremiah 20:7).

Our reading begins with the announcement "Terror on every side!" Jeremiah uses these words to foretell the destruction of Jerusalem, but they also come from the lips of those who oppose the prophet. Like Job, Jeremiah believes that his friends have turned against him (Job 19:19). What acts of "vengeance" they plot for the demise of the prophet we can only imagine. However, Jeremiah confronts fear and turns to the Lord who will act as a hero on his behalf and cause his enemies to "stumble." Jeremiah

counts himself among the just whose mind and heart is known well by God, and he prays that he will be able to witness the power of the Lord bringing Jeremiah's enemies to shame.

The final words of Jeremiah's "confession" turns from lament to praise. He commands that songs of praise ring out before the Lord because he has defended the poor—who may be understood as the lowly ones of Israel—from the "power of the wicked." It is clear that God defends the poor not because of their economic status but rather because of their dependence

For meditation and context:

Slight pause between "man" and "sin." Paul uses the example of Adam to make a complex argument about sin and sinfulness, especially its durability in Scripture. Like reading a nuanced legal argument aloud, proclaim at a slow and even pace to allow its contents to register with your assembly.

Note the inversion that concludes the reading: "transgression of the one" and "many died"; the "gracious gift" of "one man" benefitting the "many."

upon him. Although the prophet did not ask for this task of proclaiming the word of God, he never falters in his obedience and his dependence on the goodness of God.

**READING II** These verses from the fifth chapter of the Letter to the Romans serve as part of the prelude to Paul's foundational theology of baptism. Baptism is participation in Christ's death and burial so that sin can reign in the body no more and we will have life in Christ (Romans 6). The passage we read today provides the background as to why bap-

**RESPONSORIAL PSALM** Psalm 69:8–10, 14, 17, 33–35 (14c)

**R. Lord, in your great love, answer me.**

For your sake I bear insult,  
and shame covers my face.  
I have become an outcast to my brothers,  
a stranger to my children,  
because zeal for your house consumes me,  
and the insults of those who blaspheme  
you fall upon me.

I pray to you, O LORD,  
for the time of your favor, O God!  
In your great kindness answer me  
with your constant help.  
Answer me, O LORD, for bounteous is  
your kindness;  
in your great mercy turn toward me.

"See, you lowly ones, and be glad;  
you who seek God, may your hearts revive!  
For the LORD hears the poor,  
and his own who are in bonds he  
spurns not.  
Let the heavens and the earth praise him,  
the seas and whatever moves in them!"

**READING II** Romans 5:12–15

**A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Romans**

**Brothers and sisters:**

Through **one man sin entered the world,**  
and through **sin, death,**  
and thus **death came to all men, inasmuch as all sinned—**  
for **up to the time of the law, sin was in the world,**  
though **sin is not accounted** when there is **no law.**

But **death reigned from Adam to Moses,**  
**even over those who did not sin**  
after the **pattern of the trespass of Adam,**  
who is the **type of the one who was to come.**

But the **gift is not like the transgression.**  
For if by the **transgression of the one the many died,**  
**how much more did the grace of God**  
and the **gracious gift of the one man Jesus Christ**  
**overflow for the many.**

tism is necessary. Sin entered the world through the disobedience of Adam, and this resulted in the dawning of death. Adam brings about a universal predicament for all humans, namely that all participate in sin and will experience death.

The appearance of Moses in this passage is important for Paul's theology. Moses represents the giving of the law by God. Thus, from the time between Adam and Moses, humanity was without the direction of the law. This means that humanity could not be (legally) responsible for sin during this time since it did not have an understanding

of the law. Nevertheless, sin did exist at this point because death had already entered the world. Sin cannot be separated from death; death is the result of sin.

Paul's major point here is that God provides a gift in the death of his Son that far outweighs the consequences of Adam's disobedience. By his own death, Jesus destroys death once and for all. With the destruction of death comes the banishment of all sin. The grace of God that is provided in this gift is to be accessed by baptism into Christ Jesus.

Jesus is speaking to his disciples and offering them advice. There is a somewhat stern and mysterious tone that prevails.

The example of the sparrows at first seems to be out of context with what comes before, yet Jesus persists in the example, connecting it with his message about overcoming fear.

Note the inversion Matthew uses to conclude Jesus' speech in this passage, contrasting acknowledgment and denial.

GOSPEL Matthew 10:26–33

**A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew**

Jesus said to the Twelve:

“Fear no one.

**Nothing is concealed that will not be revealed,  
nor secret that will not be known.**

What I say to you in the darkness, speak in the light;  
what you hear whispered, proclaim on the housetops.

And do not be afraid of those who kill the body  
but cannot kill the soul;

rather, be afraid of the one who can destroy  
both soul and body in Gehenna.

Are not two sparrows sold for a small coin?

Yet not one of them falls to the ground  
without your Father's knowledge.

Even all the hairs of your head are counted.

So do not be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.

Everyone who acknowledges me before others

I will acknowledge before my heavenly Father.

But whoever denies me before others,

I will deny before my heavenly Father.”

GOSPEL

Jesus' instructions to the twelve apostles as he sends them out to gather the harvest of the kingdom speak of: the necessary boldness of discipleship that will turn whispers into a message shouted from the housetops. Jesus has just finished informing his disciples that when he sends them into the world, they can expect to be persecuted by those who refuse to listen to them. Their response to such persecution must be quite simply “Fear no one.” In fact, in this one reading, Jesus tells them three times that fear is not an acceptable attitude for disciples.

The quiet nature of the message of the kingdom by which Jesus instructs his disciples, spoken in “darkness” and heard “whispered,” also calls our attention to the commission of the disciples after the resurrection. The fullness of Jesus' message can't be proclaimed yet, even by the those closest to Jesus because the disciples lack a full understanding of the kingdom and what Jesus' death and resurrection will mean; at the end of Matthew's Gospel, the disciples are called to share the Good News with all peoples. Returning our attention to

this moment, the disciples do go out and proclaim it as they can at that time.

The dire warning that death is a possible outcome of this mission is cause for fear, yet Jesus helps the disciples to shift their focus from the fear of bodily harm and death to the importance of preserving one's soul in the face of the wicked. Because of their identity as followers of God, they are cared for by God. They must act in a manner that illustrates this, trusting in God and remaining in him. S.W.