



Celebrate

Sunday, September 3, 2023
14th Sunday after Pentecost

The prophet Jeremiah speaks of the incurable wound of his suffering yet finds in God's words the delight of his heart. When Peter doesn't grasp Jesus' words about suffering, Jesus tells the disciples they will find their lives in losing them. Such sacrificial love is described by Paul when he urges us to associate with the lowly and not repay evil with evil. In worship we gather as a community that we might offer ourselves for the sake of our suffering world.

Prayer of the Day

O God, we thank you for your Son, who chose the path of suffering for the sake of the world. Humble us by his example, point us to the path of obedience, and give us strength to follow your commands, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

First Reading

Jeremiah 15:15-21

Jeremiah's delight in the word of the LORD is contradicted by the heaviness of God's hand upon him and God's seeming unfaithfulness. God's tough love to Jeremiah says that if he repents, he will be allowed to continue in his strenuous ministry. Jeremiah is strengthened by the simple words, "I am with you."

O LORD, you know;
remember me and visit me,
and bring down retribution for me
on my persecutors.
In your forbearance do not take me
away;
know that on your account I suffer
insult.
¹⁶Your words were found, and I ate
them,
and your words became to me a joy
and the delight of my heart;
for I am called by your name,
O LORD, God of hosts.
¹⁷I did not sit in the company of
merrymakers,
nor did I rejoice;
under the weight of your hand I sat
alone,
for you had filled me with
indignation.
¹⁸Why is my pain unceasing,
my wound incurable,
refusing to be healed?

Truly, you are to me like a deceitful
brook,
like waters that fail.

¹⁹Therefore thus says the LORD:
If you turn back, I will take you back,
and you shall stand before me.
If you utter what is precious, and not
what is worthless,
you shall serve as my mouth.
It is they who will turn to you,
not you who will turn to them.
²⁰And I will make you to this people
a fortified wall of bronze;
they will fight against you,
but they shall not prevail over you,
for I am with you
to save you and deliver you,
says the LORD.

²¹I will deliver you out of the hand of
the wicked,
and redeem you from the grasp of
the ruthless.

Your love is be - fore my eyes; I have walked
 faith - ful - ly, faith - ful - ly with you.

Give judgment for me, O LORD, for I have lived ¹ with integrity;
 I have trusted in the LORD and ¹ have not faltered.

²Test me, O ¹ LORD, and try me;
 examine my heart ¹ and my mind.

³For your steadfast love is be- ¹ fore my eyes;
 I have walked faithful- ¹ ly with you.

⁴I have not sat ¹ with the worthless,
 nor do I consort with ¹ the deceitful. **R**

⁵I have hated the company of ¹ evildoers;
 I will not sit down ¹ with the wicked.

⁶I will wash my hands in inno- ¹ cence, O LORD,
 that I may go in procession ¹ round your altar,

⁷singing aloud a song ¹ of thanksgiving
 and recounting all your won- ¹ derful deeds.

⁸LORD, I love the house in ¹ which you dwell
 and the place where your glo- ¹ ry abides. **R**

Paul presents benchmarks for faithful relationships with Christians and non-Christians. Love is the unflagging standard of our behavior. When we encounter evil, we do not resort to its tactics but seek to overcome it with good. While Christians cannot control the actions and attitudes of others, we seek to live at peace with all people.

Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; ¹⁰love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor. ¹¹Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. ¹²Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. ¹³Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers.

¹⁴Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. ¹⁵Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. ¹⁶Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser

than you are. ¹⁷Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. ¹⁸If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. ¹⁹Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God; for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." ²⁰No, "if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink; for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads." ²¹Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Gospel

Matthew 16:21-28

After Peter confesses that Jesus is "the Messiah, the Son of the living God" (16:16), Jesus reveals the ultimate purpose of his ministry. These words prove hard to accept, even for a disciple whom Jesus has called a "rock."

From that time on [after Peter confessed that Jesus was the Messiah,] Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and undergo great suffering at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. ²²And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, "God forbid it, Lord! This must never happen to you." ²³But he turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; for you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things."

²⁴Then Jesus told his disciples, "If any want to become my followers, let them

deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. ²⁵For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it. ²⁶For what will it profit them if they gain the whole world but forfeit their life? Or what will they give in return for their life?

²⁷"For the Son of Man is to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay everyone for what has been done. ²⁸Truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom."

Prayers of Intercession

The prayers are prepared locally for each occasion. The following examples may be adapted or used as appropriate.

Remembering the caring and generous works of God, we pray for the church, creation, and the needs of our neighbors.

A brief silence.

God of life, your words are the joy at the heart of your church. Draw the seeker to you, place messages of hope and healing in the mouths of your witnesses, and open your children to your truth when we stumble. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

God of steadfast love, renew the earth by your Spirit, that lands and oceans reveal the beauty of your creation. Challenge us to live humbly and peaceably as part of your world. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

God of patience, lead those who govern to hold fast to what is good. Guide them to show honor to the people in their care. Overcome evil in all nations and grant peace to peoples and places mired in conflict (*especially*). Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

God of deliverance, remember all who are suffering, lonely, and in pain. Liberate your people being insulted, persecuted, or in the grasp of the ruthless. Give endurance to workers who persevere on this Labor Day and insure fair wages and safe working environments. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

God of justice, equip this congregation to boldly follow you in uncertain times and to remain faithful in prayer when facing challenges. Show us how best to love and care for one another and our communities. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

God of glory, we give thanks for the saints who now dwell with you in splendor (*especially*). Nurture us in faith until the day we join their heavenly song. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

Remember us according to your steadfast love as we offer these and the prayers of our heart, trusting in your compassion made known through Jesus Christ.
Amen.

Preparing for Next Week

Monday Psalm 17. **Tuesday** Revelation 3:7-13. **Wednesday** Jeremiah 17:5-18. **Thursday** Psalm 119:33-40. **Friday** Romans 10:15b-21. **Saturday** (commemoration of Peter Claver, priest, missionary to Colombia, died 1654) Ezekiel 33:1-6. **Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost** Ezekiel 33:7-11; Psalm 119:33-40; Romans 13:8-14; Matthew 18:15-20.

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