

Bible Study
Proper 23, Year C
October 9, 2016

[RCL] Jeremiah 29:1, 4-7; Psalm 66:1-11; 2 Timothy 2:8-15; Luke 17:11-19

Jeremiah 29:1,4-7

The Rule of St. Benedict talks about the virtue of stability. In being stable, we open ourselves to find Christ in people and places and situations that are unpleasant or mundane. God's people in the reading from Jeremiah found themselves in exile for their sins. While our circumstances are not nearly as disheartening or dramatic, the feeling of being stuck in a job/family/city/church that is particularly undesirable will be familiar to most of us. However, if we are always preoccupied with the Next Big Thing to add meaning and value and purpose to our life, we will certainly miss all that God has for us in the present. "You are now far from home, and you aren't going back anytime soon. Settle in. Build houses, plant gardens, grow families, pray for and work for the betterment of your new city."

- How do you find God in the ordinary?
- How do you combat the selfishness of endless wanderlust, and seek the welfare of wherever you are currently planted?

Psalm 66:1-12

The call to worship in today's Psalm remembers the crossing of the Jordan, it remembers God's "awesome deeds" and his protection of his own, and at the same time it acknowledges God's testing of them. "You have refined us like silver. You made us carry burdens. Our enemies trampled us. We went through fire and water." I can imagine the Psalmist raging in prayer with these statements. It is completely natural to be resistant, to be angry, to desire that such a cup should pass from us. It is perhaps only supernatural (with the power of the Holy Spirit), to be able to accept difficulties in life that come from God. "Job told his wife, 'Shall we receive only good from God, and not evil?' and he did not sin with his lips."

- In what ways has it been difficult for you to trust God in a time where he seemed absent?
- If you feel this testing of God in your life now, what might he be trying to show you?

2 Timothy 2:8-15

As often happens, the lectionary might be a bit more helpful for us today if it expanded the selection from the epistle. Paul's instruction to Timothy about remaining faithful and "wrangling over words" comes wrapped inside a context of instruction on community living. The warning against apostasy (abandoning faith), "if we deny him, he will deny us" is not instruction merely for Timothy; Timothy is to relay this to those in his pastoral charge, and remind them of the necessity of staying faithful together and avoiding the false teaching of Hymenaeus and Philetus, so your group might be aided by extending the reading to verse 19.

- If you identify teaching in your parish that goes against the truths of Christ's Church, how should you confront it?
- What do you do to ensure that you church community remains faithful to Christ together?

Luke 17:11-19

In keeping with St. Luke's focus on the downtrodden, poor, and marginalized, this gospel recalls the story of Jesus healing ten lepers, and only a Samaritan, despised by his neighbors, returns to give thanks. Jesus commands the lepers to show themselves to the priests, honoring the prescription in Leviticus 13-14 for determining whether one had leprosy. If the priests determined that one had leprosy, this person was made to live away from others, "outside the camp," as the disease was thought to be highly contagious. The social ostracization was extreme, leaving one out of ecclesial, civil, and family gatherings. The healing from leprosy must have come with unbelievable gratitude and emotion, and yet, only one returned...

- Do you remember to thank God for the good gifts he has given you?
- How can you practice this thankfulness today?

Written by Ryan Pollock. Pollock is a postulant for Holy Orders from the Diocese of Dallas, TX and a seminarian at Nashotah House, where he is a choral scholar and a refectorian. When not engaged in seminary business, these days he can be found alchemizing in the kitchen or attempting to play heavy metal guitar in the basement. He is married to Jessica, an artist and photographer who is studying astronomy at the University of Wisconsin.

Published by the Office of Formation of The Episcopal Church, 815 Second Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10017.

© 2016 The Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America. All rights reserved.