

Lectionary readings: Jeremiah 18: 1-11; Psalm 139: 1-6, 13-18; Philemon 1-21; Luke 14: 1, 25-33

For reflection and prayer

- **Jeremiah 18:** The parable of the potter reshaping the pot - the difference is that we are not passive and mindless, but have a will of our own. God wants us to put ourselves in His hands - loving, gentle hands - and let Him mould us into His image and likeness. How open are we to God? How willing are we to allow God gently and lovingly to transform us? It all hinges on how we see God. That, too, may be something we would like to reflect further on this week.
- **Psalm 139:** Here is a paraphrase for us to reflect on: *Lord, my Beloved, You know all about me - even my inmost thoughts. You know my strengths and my weaknesses. You know the deep desires of my heart. And despite Your intimate knowledge of me, You love me, encompassing me with love, desiring only to bless me. I find this wonderful, and it causes deep gratitude to rise within me. You knit me together in my mother's womb. You made me wonderfully complex. You haven't made any mistake. I am just filled with wonder at the mystery of it all. I am precious to You, Lord, and You are with me always, pouring out blessings on me.*
- **Philemon:** Here is what The Message says by way of introduction to this letter from Paul to Philemon: *'Every movement we make in response to God has a ripple effect, touching family, neighbours, friends, community. Belief in God alters our language. Love of God affects daily relationships. Hope in God enters into our work. Also their opposites - unbelief, indifference and despair.*

None of these movements and responses, beliefs and prayers, gestures and searches, can be confined to the soul. They spill out and make history. If they don't, they are under suspicion of being fantasies at best, hypocrisies at worst.' Perhaps this week we would like to reflect on how our response to God affects our daily life.

- **Luke 14:** People find verse 26 hard. The older versions of the Bible render it: *'Whoever comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother ...'* The Message says *'Anyone who comes to Me but refuses to let go of father, mother ... yes, even one's own self - can't be My disciple.'* The NLT has: *'If you want to be My follower, you must love Me more than ...'* The whole passage is emphasising that following Jesus is not an easy option; it is costly; it involves commitment and sacrifice. If we are Christians, then much more is required than simply attending church on Sunday and living a good life. Being a Christian means taking God into the centre of our life, putting Him first, so that we see everything through His eyes and, instead of living to please ourselves, we live to please God. We might like to reflect on how our life might change if we put God first and lived to please Him. The wonderful thing is that, when we know ourselves deeply loved by God, we will willingly open our hearts to His love, and will want, by His grace and with His help, to reach out with His love to others.

A prayer

Lord, help me to open myself up more and more to the mystery of who You are and be willing not only to have my ideas about you changed, but willing to have You change me, so that I become more real, in touch with who I am and who You are, so that I give myself wholeheartedly to You, my Beloved. Amen.