

Lectionary readings: Jeremiah 20: 7-13; Psalm 69: 7-10, 16-18; Romans 6: 1b-11; Matthew 10: 24-39

For reflection and prayer

- **Jeremiah 20:** Jeremiah pours his heart out to God, blaming God for calling him to be a prophet - a costly experience resulting in loneliness, rejection, suffering and depression. But, at the same time, the word of God is like a fire within him; he can do no other than preach the word God gives him. In the end, he can only praise God for His presence, a presence which has sustained him throughout and given him strength to face his oppressors. We have a wonderful message to proclaim, a message of love and forgiveness. Let's allow that message of love to burn in our hearts so that our words and our whole life this week will proclaim it.
- **Psalm 69:** Like Jeremiah, the Psalmist experiences rejection and ridicule because of his faith in God. And yet he cries out to God in prayer, pleading with God to help him, confident that God in His unfailing love will respond. How do we react when we are up against it? Do we rail at God? (That's ok, for God can take it; and it's good to be honest with God.) Do we turn against God? Or do we draw closer to God, our Beloved, the One who loves us dearly, and cry out to Him to pour His grace into us so that we might be able to cope with what we are going through? Much to reflect on here this week.
- **Romans 6:** Perhaps this is difficult for us to understand as we practise infant baptism. In the early church when people were coming from Judaism, baptism was the

symbol of the beginning of a new life. They died to their former life and were raised to a new life in Christ. One way of thinking of it is letting go of the 'false self', the ego, where the self is to the fore and we do what we want to do; and seeking to live out of the 'true self', the self that God created us to be with Christ at the centre, living to please God. And that means a radical change, and lots of little 'deaths' that lead to a more fulfilling life. So we might ask ourselves this week: How much do I allow God to affect my whole life - my work, my leisure, my relationships, my thoughts, my words?

- **Matthew 10: v37:** *'If you love your father or mother more than you love Me, you are not worthy of being Mine,'* says Jesus. This verse troubles a lot of people. One way we might interpret what Jesus is saying is this: In finding our true self in God, we find everyone else in God. And as we enter more deeply into the mystery of God's love, we find God in each person and our love for others grows. In other words, the more we love God, the more we love others by His grace working within us. Here is another verse to reflect on this week: v39 (The Message): *'If your first concern is to look after yourself, you'll never find yourself. But if you forget about yourself and look to Me, you'll find both yourself and Me.'* John Calvin, the Reformer, said something similar: Knowledge of God and knowledge of self go hand in hand.

A prayer

'God loves us when we cannot; God holds us when we will not; God sees us when we dare not; God knows us when we do not. But oh that we might come to love and hold ourselves, to see and know ourselves, that we might then glimpse God.'
(Edwina Gateley)