

## Sunday Thought

9th October 2022 28th Sunday in Ordinary Time

### Readings

Jeremiah 29: 1,4 - 7

Psalm 66: 1 - 12

2 Timothy 2: 8 -15

Luke 17: 11 - 19



### **In-between Faith**

*'I feel as though my world's falling apart!'*

That has become a chorus in recent days. It's on the lips of people looking at new fuel bills and family economics in general. We feel for those, mostly young people whose dreams of 'a home of our own' have been dashed by 'care-less' government ideologies. Far worse, of course for the countless numbers experiencing daily crises and heartbreak. I think especially of desolate families in Pakistan, Japan, Florida..... whose whole life has been literally 'torn apart'. They and we ask, 'How do we get through this?'

The prophet Jeremiah asked that question on behalf of God's people when they had become slaves in Babylon. God gave him an answer. He was to write a letter to the suffering, exiled nation. I am not sure how it would have first appealed to the exiles but it still applies to every 'fallen apart' experience of our lives. It proved to be right – in time – and is still a guide to hanging on in faith. It requires us to see that God works different shifts to us. He promises the exiles that they will return home to their land and know prosperity again, BUT two or three generations at least will pass before that happens!

So, how do we cope with that? How trust God for a future we may not see? I write from a personal situation of course, in which things may sometimes feel shaky but mostly stay together. However, I can still write of what I believe to be a proved letter from God. 'First of all,' he writes through Jeremiah, 'accept your situation. Think big and think long-term. Accept where you are but don't forget I'm there with you. Settle down. Build houses. Plant your plots. Have families. Prepare for the future of your children and their children's children. Work for the good of the places where you settle because that will be for your good as well.' It was a letter to all – religious and secular leaders and every citizen in exile. At heart the message is – 'Build an In-Between Faith – faith for this time.' Use the 'life falling apart' experience to build a deeper, richer, more trusting friendship with your God. Not a grudging, rebellious acceptance, but a trusting embrace of hanging in there with the Lord. When the initial shock becomes bearable, the anger abates, life-adjustments become more acceptable, new friendships are made and tears flow less often, hold on to the promise that God is in this with you. You may have to wait to see it whole - from 'heaven-side' – but an 'in-between faith' will see you through.'

The other readings today give helpful teaching about how to build that special interim faith. The Psalmist would see the *falling apart* as a testing time. He uses the picture of silver being refined. The process meant the metal had to pass through the heart of a fire several times before all its impurities were burned away. One commenator adds that once it is truly refined, you should be able to see your face in it. I have been privileged to see a reflection of Jesus in so many 'tested Christians'. I pray that every testing of my life may be like that. I notice on visits to hospital how every extra piece of electrical equipment has to bear a 'tested' label and often feel there should be an equivalent sticker for many patients.

The in-between faith doesn't happen all at once. Today Paul speaks to young Timothy about endurance and his own gratitude for his refining times because he is sure they are all used by God for his glory in the saving and blessing of many others lives. He has colourful illustrations of the disciplined soldier, the strict rule-keeping athlete and the hard-working farmer who each achieve their aims by endurance. Best of all, Paul reminds me that building an interim faith is dependent on being with Christ and staying with him – *living with him and trusting him through all* – until, almost as a surprise we discover that our *in-between faith* has become 'everyday faith'.



Today's well-loved gospel story reminds me that an everyday life of trusting God, is all bound up with a thankful heart which keeps returning to expectantly ask for more.

**A prayer of Glorious Praise** [based on Psalm 66]

Lord, my God

In my prayers of praise, I am united with your whole church on earth and in heaven

I hear loud songs of the worldwide church all around me giving you their praise in diverse liturgy and languages.

I hear all the glorious choirs of heaven

and every musical instrument created for your praise –

Heart-touching music interspersed with silences of expectancy.



Together, we sing of all the amazing things you have achieved in human lives and in nations' histories.

Lord, my adoration is so small,

my voice so weak, my instrument often out of tune amid the thunder and the stillness of worship

This practice for a great united performance yet to come.