

Gail Addis, IHM

Reflection

February 28, 2024

In our first reading, as a prophet, Jeremiah has been called to speak God's word to the people. His listeners, however, didn't want to hear and they, along with the religious and secular leaders are plotting his death. Even his family turned against him. His message was disrupting their neat, secure world even though that world was full of injustice. His persecutors are not aware of any connection to Jeremiah, a fellow Jew, or to God with whom they have a covenant relationship. They operate out of **the illusion of separateness** and can do or say what they please, yet still believe they are connected to their religious roots.

In the **Gospel**, those plotting against Jesus do not treat him any differently than Jeremiah was treated. Jesus was disrupting the status quo. The authorities see no connection to him because he subverts their world view. They, too, live with **their illusion of separateness**. Jesus has gone about doing good and spoken God's word, but there is a conspiracy unfolding to do away with him. Jesus knows this and takes his disciples aside by themselves to let them know what's going to happen to him. He knows the affect the days ahead will have on them and he wants to affirm the connection between them. Their lives are intertwined, not separate.

Jesus is sharing his heart, telling them what he faces in going up to Jerusalem. He will be handed over several times, condemned, mocked, scourged, crucified, and raised on the third day. You would think Jesus might receive a little compassion or understanding but there is no response from his followers..... **Nothing!**

Then the mother of James and John approaches with her two boys. Jesus asks her "what do you want?" She wants her sons to have positions of privilege and status in the kingdom. She wants Jesus to give them preferential treatment. Jesus has just told them he is going to suffer and die and it's like they never heard what he said. There is a total disconnect from Jesus's life. At that moment, they only saw Jesus for what he could do for them in his new kingdom. They didn't really see Jesus and had misunderstood what the kingdom of God is all about.

Jesus moves the focus off himself and asks James and John: "Are you able to drink the cup that I am to drink?" Yes---if that will get them the top places with the

messiah. The other ten disciples were indignant at the brothers but gave no response to what Jesus had just shared. They, too, had failed to understand Jesus' message.

In that moment, amid a group of his closest followers, Jesus was utterly alone. He had not been heard; his pain had not been received nor responded to. **His pain was not their pain.** The disciples still did not grasp the implications of what Jesus had been teaching them by his words and deeds. **There is a cost to discipleship!**

Jesus doesn't dwell on or respond to their lack of concern or caring. Rather he uses the experience as a teachable moment about what real greatness in God's kingdom looks like. He explains, once again, that his life, God's plan, is not about personal ambition and prominence but rather about service to others. He reminds them not to be like those who want to make their importance felt. If you want to be great, be the servant of all. I did not come to be served, but to serve.

What about us? How closely do we attend to the pain and vulnerability of another or hold and receive another's suffering.? Are we always in a hurry so we close the ear of our heart because we're centered on our own agenda, and can't make time and space for another? We see ourselves as separate, so their suffering is not our concern. We have places to go and things to do! We fail to see Jesus in the disguise of the other. As Joan Chittister reminds us,

"The God who created us lives in each of us....and intends to speak through us. So, it is to others who are also this voice, this image, that we must listen for the message, strain to see the Face of God"

We are the sacrament of Christ for one another.

Do we act prophetically as Jeremiah and Jesus, and speak truth to power whether that power is political or religious or in support of those who do speak? Can we drink the cup that might come from that action of being faithful to the gospel and our own experience.?

Can we speak up if we hear gossip or rumors or assumptions being spoken or change the direction of the conversation? Can we drink the cup that may come

from that prophetic action of communication? We are interdependent, connected to everyone and everything. Jesus is the one we meet every day in the eyes of those in need. That's the Jesus who awaits our friendship and care. It is only the second week of lent and Jesus says to each of us, "**what do you want**, how do you want to live your communion with one another and with God? How will you, and how will I, foster the well-being of those we meet today? "**What do we want?**"

