

ctkAlive! Scripture Study

12th Sunday in Ordinary Time 2020—A Cycle Readings



(Artist unknown)

Note: For your convenience and to broaden your benefit from this and all sessions in this series, we have added links to books, authors, and other references mentioned in the text.

Caution: *Links to the internet are like rabbits dashing across a hunter's path. Instinct says, "Leave the reflection and chase after that link!" Instead, we suggest waiting until you have followed the entire reflection. Then take all the time you wish to follow these interesting and educational links.*

Exception: *In the course of the lesson, you may have an opportunity to watch or listen to a relevant song or video.*

Opening Thought for Our Times



"Invincible" by
[Albert Camus](#) (1913-1960)
Nobel Prize Literature winner
(an appropriate reflection for our uncertain times)

In the midst of hate,
I found there was, within me, an invincible love.
In the midst of tears,
I found there was, within me, an invincible smile.
In the midst of chaos,
I found there was, within me, an invincible calm.

I realized, through it all, that . . .
In the midst of winter,
I found there was, within me, an invincible summer.
And that makes me happy.
For it says that no matter how hard the world pushes against me,
within me, there's something stronger—
something better, pushing right back.

Note: Albert Camus was not a Christian, but this poem reflects a truth we hold with him about the constant struggle between light and darkness in our souls.

Introduction to the 12th Sunday in Ordinary Time Readings

For the past two months, our weekend liturgies and readings have focused on themes related to Lent, Easter, the major post-resurrection appearances of the Risen Christ, plus the Feasts of Ascension, Pentecost, Trinity Sunday, and Corpus Christi (Body of Christ). Those major events are now behind us.

What we call Ordinary Time is upon us. It will stretch through the summer and fall, before giving way to the First Sunday of Advent. Appropriately, the predominant liturgical color of the season is **green**. It's as if we had pitched our tents on the Mount of Transfiguration, but now the Risen Christ calls us to return again to the flatlands of our lives. Without unifying Scriptural themes to guide us, we will pay close attention to the Scriptures offered to us in each week's liturgy. Our Lord calls us to search the weekend readings for hidden "nuggets of spiritual nourishment."

Let's make one thing clear. There is nothing "ordinary" about Ordinary Time! In fact, we will delve into the major prophets of Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament), plus the writings that nourished the early Christian communities, and the daily life of Jesus during his too-short public ministry. The Church invites us to learn and gain inspiration week by week.

So, let's begin.

Jeremiah 20: 10-13 "I hear many people whispering, 'Terror is all around me.'" Jeremiah's long ministry as Yahweh's messenger brought him great personal suffering at the hands of his own wayward people. He is a great model of perseverance in faith, despite rejection by those losing their faith in Yahweh.

Psalm 69 "Lord, in your great love, answer me." Again we learn that faithful living in and for God may sometimes require us to put our health and safety in peril.

Romans 5: 12-15 "Sin entered the world through one man, and through sin, death; and later on, death spread to all humankind, because all sinned." Paul speaks to our

common “cross,” one he shared with Jeremiah and the psalmist. Can, then, we expect a trouble-free life?

Matthew 10: 26-33 “Whoever acknowledges me before others, I will acknowledge before my Father in heaven.” What better advocate before our Father could we hope for than our Savior himself?

First Reading from the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah (20: 10-13)

Background: Jeremiah (ca. 650 - 560 BCE) bears the traditional nicknames. “weeping prophet” and “reluctant prophet.” He often fought against Yahweh for choosing him for the thankless role of prophet.

Greater detail is known about Jeremiah’s early and later life than any other prophet. Baruch was a disciple, friend, and scribe (secretary) to Jeremiah. He is thought to have written the *second part* of the book, which is mostly prose and refers often to Jeremiah in the third person.

Jeremiah’s teaching on prayer included these timely themes:

- (1) God is not a problem to be solved;
- (2) prayer is personal language raised to the highest degree;
- (3) we need to listen to God—pay attention to the one who pays close attention to us.

In the following four verses of Chapter 20, we see that Jeremiah sometimes prayed through poetic verse.

0, I hear many people whispering,
“Terror is all around! Denounce him! Yes, denounce him!” *

All my friends watch me to see if I will slip:
“Perhaps he can be deceived,” they say;
“then we can get the better of him and have our revenge.”

But Yahweh, a mighty warrior, is with me.
My persecutors will stumble and not prevail;
that failure will be their shame
and their disgrace will never be forgotten.
Yahweh, God of Hosts, you test the just
and probe the heart and mind.

Let me see your revenge on them,
for to you I have entrusted my cause.
Sing to Yahweh! Praise Yahweh and say:
he has rescued the poor from the clutches of the wicked!

* See the closing poem at the end of these reflections.

Personal Reflection

Jeremiah's prayer echoes many themes in the psalms of David, who lived two centuries before him and likewise suffered betrayal by his own family. Jeremiah's distress comes from being misunderstood by those who rejected his prophetic warnings.

— *How have I experienced the pain of being misunderstood at times and/or wrongly interpreted by someone, or by many?*

In spiritual writer Judith Ingram's beautiful book of meditations, *Forgiving Day by Day: Practicing God's Ways in Our Relationships*, she offers us these wise words who nurse their betrayal: "Forgiveness is not complete until we can pray for blessing on our enemy."

— *What is my visceral response to personal betrayal by someone we thought we could trust?*

— *How long does it take me to finally say, "Father, forgive them . . . ?" Or am I more likely to strike back to "even the score"?*

Antiphon: Psalm 69 (8-10, 14, 17, 33-35)

Cry from the depths of sorrow: "Lord, in your great love, answer me."

Lord, in your great love, answer me.

Let me not bring disgrace to those
who hope in you, O Yahweh God of hosts;
may I cause no dishonor to those
who seek you, O God of Israel—
since I am held in contempt for your sake,
and shame has covered my face.
I have become a stranger to my kindred,
an alien to my mother's sons.
Zeal for your house consumes me, as fire,
and those who insult you, insult me as well.

Lord, in your great love, answer me.

But I pray to you, O Yahweh.
At a time most favorable to you,
in your great love, O God, answer me,
with your unfailing help.

Lord, in your great love, answer me.

In your mercy, O Yahweh, give me a good answer;
in your great compassion, turn to me.
Let the lowly witness this and be glad.
You who seek God, may your hearts be revived.
For Yahweh hears the needy;
and does not despise those in captivity.
Let heaven and earth praise him,
the seas and whatever moves in them.

Lord, in your great love, answer me.

Personal Reflection

As in the first reading from Jeremiah, Psalm 69 is a lament over family strife and misunderstanding: “I have become a stranger to my kindred, an alien to my mother’s sons.”

- *What advice would I give to someone who is currently at odds with a family member or once-close friend?*
- *If I am distressed over a fallout with a family member and/or a close friend, how hard is it for me to bring that sorrow to God in humble prayer? How inclined am I to compartmentalize that area of my life, placing it off-limits to my spiritual life and practice? (Be honest.)*

Second Reading: St. Paul’s Letter to the Romans (5: 12-15)

“Therefore, sin entered the world through one man; and through sin, death; and later on, death spread to all humankind, because all sinned. As long as there was no law, they could not speak of disobedience, but sin was already in the world. This is why, from Adam to Moses, death reigned among them, although their sin was not disobedience, as in Adam’s case—this was not the true Adam, but foretold the other, who was to come. Such has been the fall, but God’s gift goes far beyond. All died, because of the fault of one man, but how *much more* does the grace of God spread, when the gift he granted reaches all, from this unique man, Jesus Christ.”

Personal Reflection

Note: Romans is the only letter St. Paul wrote to a Christian community he had not yet visited. The community consisted of both Jewish and pagan converts, struggling to co-exist and find common ground despite their differences..

Paul was no stranger to evil. He never forgot that he was steeped in it until well into his manhood (see Galatians 1: 13). He writes from that perspective when offering advice and encouragement to the community in Rome, surrounded as they were by the prevailing pagan society. Building community in a socially and historically diverse parish is daily challenge.

- *How good a community builder am I in my parish? Do merely I sit on the fringes and take only what is good for myself, or do I give back by participating in the everyday life of my parish community?*
- *If I'm a taker, what do I "get" from it? If I'm a giver, what rewards do I "take away" with me from participating actively in parish life?*

Proclamation from the Gospel of Matthew (10: 26-33)

“There is nothing covered that will not be uncovered. There is nothing hidden that will not be made known.

“What I am telling you in the dark, you must speak in the light. What you hear in private, proclaim from the housetops.

“Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but have no power to kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of him who can destroy both body and soul in hell.

“For a few cents you can buy two sparrows. Yet not one sparrow falls to the ground without your Father knowing. As for you, every hair of your head has been counted. Do not be afraid: you are worth more than many sparrows!

“Whoever acknowledges me before others, I will acknowledge before my Father in heaven. Whoever rejects me before others, I will reject before my Father in heaven.”

Personal Reflection

“What I am telling you in the dark, you must speak in the light. What you hear in private, proclaim from the housetops.”

- *Do I consider myself primarily a “praying” Catholic . . . or a “doing” Catholic? What does Jesus say about choosing one over the other?*

- *What does Jesus say in this passage about my personal value in God's eyes? How strongly do I believe that I am precious to God, as I am, with all my virtues and vices? What, if anything, prevents me from accepting God's saving love . . . completely and without reservation?*

Shelter-in-Place and the “George Floyd” Aftermath

During these weeks since the murder of George Floyd, much has been said and written about the need for police reform in the U.S.

- *Some are calling for dissolution of policing as we know it. Others call for a more nuanced approach to police reform. Where do I stand on the scale of total dissolution at one end and gradual, targeted reform at the other.*
- *What would a local police force look like, if I were the person in charge?*

Journaling Prompts

Take some time to write about the insights gained from reflecting on the readings for the 12th Sunday of Ordinary Time and on recent calls to end racial discrimination. Suggested prompts:

- *What is the first thought that comes to mind?*

We mustn’t simply be grateful “recipients” of God’s good gifts. We need to be “givers,” too.

- *What difference will this week’s Scriptures and current societal events make in how I think, live, love—and “give back”—during the week ahead?*

Questions

Feel free to send any questions or comments you might have to ctkAlive@ctkph.org

Preview of Next Session

13th Sunday in Ordinary Time

II Kings 4: 8-11, 14-16 In gratitude for a family’s kindness, the Prophet Elisha (*not Elijah*) speaks a personal prophecy to the wife who has no male child: “This time next year you will be fondling a baby son.”

Psalm 89: 2-3, 16-19 “The promises of the Lord I will sing forever; through all generations my mouth shall proclaim your faithfulness.”

Romans 6: 3-4, 8-11 “If then we have died with Christ we shall also live with him.”

Matthew 10: 37-40 “Whoever gives only a cup of cold water to one of these little ones to drink because the little one is a disciple, I say to you, (they) will surely not lose his (their) reward.”

For Inspirational Viewing/Listening/Reading

Books:

[Run with the Horses](#) by Eugene H. Peterson
(the life of Jeremiah the prophet, told by an eminent Scripture scholar)

[Forgiving Day by Day](#) by Judith Ingram
(wonderful short, daily reflections on the theme of forgiveness)

Note: I have read both of these books and highly recommend them.—AJG

Song:

“[More than Many Sparrows](#),” words and music by Andy Severyn

Closing Prayer/Poem

(The poet asks us to step back from the tension of the moment and, instead, bathe ourselves in another truth.)

Rest in the Peace of This Moment

By Kris Cervantes

Rest now,
Rest in the peace of this moment.
Be at ease.
Look up at the stars, and down at the grass:
Imagine the stars looking back at you over years and centuries,
across oceans of empty space.
Imagine the feel of the grass on your bare feet and feel it—
dry and crunchy, soft, and supple.
Rest now,
Rest in the peace of this moment.
(continued)

Dream for a little while of young people and young animals,
innocent in the way of the young, careless, and uncaring,
accepting everything in their newness.
Dream for a little while of the elders and the wisdom they have to give,
the voices that say to you:
It is right and proper to rest now,
Rest in the peace of this moment.

Be still,
At the turning axis of the world,
And let go,
Of the long unspooling of history, of sorrow and joy and birth and death
and all the long years between.
Rest now,
Rest in the peace of this moment.

See also, “[Desiderata](#),” © [Max Ehrmann](#) 1927

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