

Rev. Derek Fairman

22<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time A

In the first reading, the prophet Jeremiah says to the Lord, "You duped me, O Lord, and I let myself be duped." In other words, the prophet feels as if he has been tricked. We hear in the next lines that he is being mocked because of the words of prophecy that he utters. He does not bring words of comfort like other prophets, but only mostly words of destruction. Perhaps he feels that he has been made to suffer more than other prophets, or that, had he known that he was going to suffer as much as he did, he would have never taken up the Lord's invitation to be a prophet and speak the Lord's words to the people.

I think we can all sympathize with Jeremiah's feelings. I think that we have all wondered why we must suffer something alone, or why we seem to suffer while others do not. Maybe we feel that we are being treated unfairly. Perhaps we have been in situations in which we have felt that we would not have agreed to something if we knew what we were in for. When we are dealing with the Lord, it can be difficult to know how we should respond. We don't want to be angry, but we also want to understand.

We must understand that in this passage the prophet Jeremiah is not somehow accusing God of lying or deceiving him. The prophet still believes that the Lord is good and has good in store for Jeremiah. This is Jeremiah struggling to understand the ways of the God that he is close to. This is not the accusation of an enemy, but the complaint of a friend. Jeremiah is struggling with the kinds of questions that go through our own minds, but he does not intend to give up.

Earlier, in chapter 15, Jeremiah laments his situation, and complains to the Lord: "Why is my pain continuous, my wound incurable, refusing to be healed? To me you are like a deceptive brook, waters that cannot be relied upon!" Jeremiah means that when he needs the Lord's assistance, he cannot find it, just as a running stream runs normally when it is not needed, but dries up when someone is looking for water. This is a complaint of a friend, not an accusation that God cannot be trusted.

Perhaps we too have felt like Jeremiah. When we looked for the Lord, it seemed as if He were absent. When we turned to Him for protection or for help, we couldn't find the help we wanted. Perhaps we have prayed that the Lord take away some hurt or pain. We have prayed that the Lord make things in our lives better. We have prayed to the Lord, but the Lord did not seem to answer. It seems that we could sympathize with Jeremiah's complaint.