

*2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday of Lent 2021*

**Jeremiah 18:18-20**

*The people of Judah and the citizens of Jerusalem said, "Come, let us contrive a plot against Jeremiah. It will not mean the loss of instruction from the priests, nor of counsel from the wise, nor of messages from the prophets.*

*And so, let us destroy him by his own tongue; let us carefully note his every word."*

*Heed me, O LORD, and listen to what my adversaries say. Must good be repaid with evil that they should dig a pit to take my life?*

*Remember that I stood before you to speak in their behalf, to turn away your wrath from them.*

**Psalms 31:5-6, 14, 15-16**

*You will free me from the snare they set for me,  
for you are my refuge.  
Into your hands I commend my spirit;  
you will redeem me, O LORD, O faithful God.*

*I hear the whispers of the crowd, that frighten me from every side,  
as they consult together against me,  
plotting to take my life.*

*But my trust is in you, O LORD;  
I say, "You are my God."  
In your hands is my destiny; rescue me  
from the clutches of my enemies and my persecutors.*

**Matthew 20:17-28**

*As Jesus was going up to Jerusalem, he took the Twelve disciples aside by themselves, and said to them on the way,*

*"Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be handed over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death, and hand him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and scourged and crucified, and he will be raised on the third day."*

*Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee approached Jesus with her sons and did him homage, wishing to ask him for something.*

*He said to her, "What do you wish?" She answered him, "Command that these two sons of mine sit, one at your right and the other at your left, in your kingdom."*

*Jesus said in reply, "You do not know what you are asking.*

*Can you drink the chalice that I am going to drink?"*

*They said to him, "We can."*

*He replied, "My chalice you will indeed drink, but to sit at my right and at my left, this is not mine to give but is for those for whom it has been prepared by my Father."*

*When the ten heard this, they became indignant at the two brothers.*

*But Jesus summoned them and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and the great ones make their authority over them felt.  
But it shall not be so among you. Rather, whoever wishes to be great among you shall be your servant; whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave.  
Just so, the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.*



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*“and the Son of Man will be handed over...  
to be mocked and scourged and crucified, and he will be raised on the third day.”*

You know of the scourging of Jesus at the command of Pilate. It is a gruesome vision to contemplate as we picture Jesus chained to the whipping post, yielding to those vicious strikes.

You know of the tortuous three hours Jesus hung nailed on the cross, gasping for breath and writhing in pain. We are asked to contemplate his agony, especially on Fridays.

When we embrace the suffering that Jesus freely offered for love of us... well... it makes us humble. It makes us repent for the wrongs we've committed against Jesus' brothers and sisters. It makes us repent for us ignoring the needs of our brothers and sisters in Christ.

But we are missing one of the sufferings that we just quoted from Scripture. Jesus was to be handed over for scourging, for crucifixion and ... what else?

For mocking!

Now, compared to scourging and crucifixion, how can mere “mocking” be included as part of the Passion of Christ. And yet let us not underestimate how cruelly mocking is felt.

The Gospel Evangelists certainly took it seriously in their Passion narratives.

*Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus inside the praetorium and gathered the whole cohort around him.*

*They stripped off his clothes and threw a scarlet military cloak about him. Weaving a crown out of thorns, they placed it on his head, and a reed in his right hand. And kneeling before him, they mocked him, saying, “Hail, King of the Jews!”*

*They spat upon him and took the reed and kept striking him on the head. And when they had mocked him, they stripped him of the cloak, dressed him in his own clothes, and led him off to crucify him. (Mt 27:27-31)*

*And they placed over his head the written charge against him: This is Jesus, the King of the Jews. Two revolutionaries were crucified with him, one on his right and the other on his left.*

*Those passing by reviled him, shaking their heads and saying, “You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself, if you are the Son of God, [and] come down from the cross!”*

*Likewise the chief priests with the scribes and elders mocked him and said, “He saved others; he cannot save himself. So he is the king of Israel! Let him come down from the cross now, and we will believe in him. He trusted in God; let him deliver him now if he wants him. For he said, ‘I am the Son of God.’”*

*The revolutionaries who were crucified with him also kept abusing him in the same way. (Mt 27:37-44)*

In many ways, the Gospel Evangelists record the mocking in more detail than the scourging and crucifixion.

Today when one is being mocked, we often try to put on a brave face as we incur the insult (or maybe we escalate the confrontation).

The insulter may not even be aware of the extent of the injury or that we may harbor a resentment that can poison our relationship. We find that we may even have to call upon God’s graces to even attempt a movement towards forgiveness.

Worse, but sadly possibly so, we may find that we are the one doing the mocking; we are the bully. With repentance, we turn to God for his forgiveness and we present ourselves to our injured friend for apologies and reconciliation.

This is serious business. It goes straight to the heart of the great commandment given us at Jesus's last supper on Maundy Thursday.

*Love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another. (Jn 13:34)*

Mocking, scourging and crucifixion. Sobering. And appropriate for our contemplation in this penitential season. Yet, may we never forget what this season is preparation for. The last of Jesus' predictions to his apostles:

*and he will be raised on the third day.*

#### EASTER

It is through Jesus' resurrection that we are returned to right relationship with God, with our neighbor and assured of Paradise.

May we love as Jesus loves.

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