# PENTECOST 18

## Proper 23 - Year C

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### Jeremiah 29:1, 4-7

**29** These are the words of the letter that the prophet Jeremiah sent from Jerusalem to the remaining elders among the exiles and to the priests, the prophets, and all the people whom Nebuchadnezzar had taken into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon.

[4] Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: [5] Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat what they produce. [6] Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. [7] But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.

### Commentary from Matthew Sanaker

Jeremiah prophesied to the Judean exiles in Babylon that they would not be restored quickly to Jerusalem. Later in chapter 29, he tells them that it will be 70 years before the children or grandchildren of the exiles return to Jerusalem. In this passage, he tells them that they should make their peace with that and get accustomed to living where they are. Build houses, have children, marry off their sons and daughters, and see the next generation born. But most importantly, they are to live among the Babylonians and be a blessing to them, for in blessing Babylon, they will find that they are blessed.

In this passage, I hear echoes of the commandment to love one's neighbors. The prophets tell the Israelites that they were sent into exile because they failed to honor God and obey God's commandments. God, through Jeremiah, is telling them that they should learn to live faithfully while in exile and seek not only their own wellbeing, that of the families and fellow Israelites, but also the well-being of the Babylonians, strangers and outsiders who are now their neighbors. We can also read in this a repetition of the theme of being strangers in the land of Egypt. They were told not to mistreat the stranger or oppress the foreigner; now they must live as foreigners once again and remember the commandments of God.

### Discussion Questions

How can the prophets and the Gospel inform how we treat those who are of a different ethnicity or nationality than us?

How are we called to be a prophetic voice in our own country, reminding people that the well-being of those who live in our towns, cities, states, and the nation will be the key to our own well-being, regardless of where each of us was born?

## Psalm 66:1-11

[1] Be joyful in God, all you lands; *
sing the glory of his Name; sing the glory of his praise.
[2] Say to God, "How awesome are your deeds! *
because of your great strength your enemies cringe before you.
[3] All the earth bows down before you, *
sings to you, sings out your Name."
[4] Come now and see the works of God, *
how wonderful he is in his doing toward all people.
[5] He turned the sea into dry land, so that they went through the water on foot, *
and there we rejoiced in him.
[6] In his might he rules for ever; his eyes keep watch over the nations; *
let no rebel rise up against him.
[7] Bless our God, you peoples; *
make the voice of his praise to be heard;
[8] Who holds our souls in life, *
and will not allow our feet to slip.
[9] For you, O God, have proved us; *
you have tried us just as silver is tried.
[10] You brought us into the snare; *
you laid heavy burdens upon our backs.
[11] You let enemies ride over our heads; we went through fire and water; *
but you brought us out into a place of refreshment.

### Commentary from Matthew Sanaker

This psalm begins and ends with words of praise. The psalmist recounts how God saved the people of Israel, yet also acknowledges that God watches over all of the nations and all of the people. It also takes a turn from verse 9 to the first half of verse 11, stating that God leads people into difficult situations, snares, and heavy burdens, even letting enemies ride over their heads. There are certainly times when we might question why God lets things happen, especially when terrible things happen to innocent and faithful people. For some, it may even cause them to lose their faith. Finally, after acknowledging that life can be difficult even for the faithful, the psalmist bears witness to the saving and redeeming power of God. God does not leave his people, for God is always faithful.

### Discussion Questions

Have you experienced times when your faith was tested?

How have you been a witness to God's redeeming power in your life or in the life of someone close to you?

## 2 Timothy 2:8-15

[8] Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, a
descendant of David—that is my gospel, [9] for which I
suffer hardship, even to the point of being chained
like a criminal. But the word of God is not
chained. [10] Therefore I endure everything for the sake
of the elect, so that they may also obtain the salvation
that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory. [11] The saying
is sure:

If we have died with him, we will also live with him;
[12] if we endure, we will also reign with him;
if we deny him, he will also deny us;
[13] if we are faithless, he remains faithful—
he cannot deny himself.

[14] Remind them of this, and warn them before the
Lord that they are to avoid wrangling over words,
which does no good but only ruins those who are
listening. [15] Do your best to present yourself to God
as one approved by him, a worker who has no need
to be ashamed, rightly explaining the word of truth.

**Commentary from Matthew Sanaker**

In Paul's letter to his friend Timothy, a faithful coworker in spreading the Gospel and founding Christian communities, the author encourages him to continue in their work and follow the example set for him. The letter is both personal and pastoral. In this passage, Paul talks about the suffering that he is enduring for the sake of the Gospel as an emulation of the suffering of Christ. Paul proclaims the faithfulness of God as the truth upon which every Christian can depend. He conveys in so few words his own experience of full identification with and his sense of oneness with Christ; for Paul, the Gospel is participatory: "We have died with him, we will also live with him." Paul tells Timothy not to wrangle over words; he needs only to tell people what he himself has experienced, leading and teaching by example, so his way of living will speak more clearly than any words.

**Discussion Questions**

Have there been times in your life when you have felt Christ's presence?

How do you and your faith community participate in the life and work of Christ?

## Luke 17:11-19

[11] On the way to Jerusalem Jesus was going through
the region between Samaria and Galilee. [12] As he
entered a village, ten men with a skin disease
approached him. Keeping their distance, [13] they called
out, saying, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on
us!" [14] When he saw them, he said to them, "Go and
show yourselves to the priests." And as they went,
they were made clean. [15] Then one of them, when he
saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God
with a loud voice. [16] He prostrated himself at
Jesus's feet and thanked him. And he was a
Samaritan. [17] Then Jesus asked, "Were not ten made
clean? So where are the other nine? [18] Did none of
them return to give glory to God except this
foreigner?" [19] Then he said to him, "Get up and go on
your way; your faith has made you well."

### Commentary from Matthew Sanaker

In this vignette in Luke's Gospel, he recalls one of Jesus' many healing miracles. In his telling, like the story of the man attacked and left for dead on the Jericho road, it is a foreigner, a Samaritan, who honors God most faithfully. When Jesus heals ten lepers, only one turns and thanks him. Presumably, the other nine do as they are instructed and immediately leave to show themselves to the priests, so that they may be readmitted into the community. Certainly, their excitement at the prospect of returning to society after living as outcasts is understandable. And yet there was one – a Samaritan – who, upon realizing that his life had been changed, stopped and praised God in a loud voice and thanked Jesus extravagantly. Jesus tells him that his faith has made him well, and by asking after the other nine, he makes it clear that the foreigner who is looked down upon in Judea has honored God more faithfully than his Judean counterparts.

### Discussion Questions

Have you witnessed the faithful gratitude of someone who has been marginalized and has had their dignity restored?

When our prayers are answered, do we stop and first thank God before continuing to go about our lives?

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