

## Lent Devotional April 18, 2019

### SCRIPTURE

#### Jeremiah 20:7–18

- <sup>7</sup> O LORD, you have enticed me,  
and I was enticed;  
you have overpowered me,  
and you have prevailed.  
I have become a laughingstock all day long;  
everyone mocks me.
- <sup>8</sup> For whenever I speak, I must cry out,  
I must shout, “Violence and destruction!”  
For the word of the LORD has become for me  
a reproach and derision all day long.
- <sup>9</sup> If I say, “I will not mention him,  
or speak any more in his name,”  
then within me there is something like a burning fire  
shut up in my bones;  
I am weary with holding it in,  
and I cannot.
- <sup>10</sup> For I hear many whispering:  
“Terror is all around!  
Denounce him! Let us denounce him!”  
All my close friends  
are watching for me to stumble.  
“Perhaps he can be enticed,  
and we can prevail against him,  
and take our revenge on him.”
- <sup>11</sup> But the LORD is with me like a dread warrior;  
therefore my persecutors will stumble,  
and they will not prevail.  
They will be greatly shamed,  
for they will not succeed.  
Their eternal dishonor  
will never be forgotten.
- <sup>12</sup> O LORD of hosts, you test the righteous,  
you see the heart and the mind;  
let me see your retribution upon them,  
for to you I have committed my cause.
- <sup>13</sup> Sing to the LORD;  
praise the LORD!  
For he has delivered the life of the needy  
from the hands of evildoers.
- <sup>14</sup> Cursed be the day  
on which I was born!  
The day when my mother bore me,  
let it not be blessed!
- <sup>15</sup> Cursed be the man

who brought the news to my father, saying,  
“A child is born to you, a son,”  
making him very glad.

<sup>16</sup> Let that man be like the cities  
that the LORD overthrew without pity;  
let him hear a cry in the morning  
and an alarm at noon,

<sup>17</sup> because he did not kill me in the womb;  
so my mother would have been my grave,  
and her womb forever great.

<sup>18</sup> Why did I come forth from the womb  
to see toil and sorrow,  
and spend my days in shame?

### **DEVOTIONAL**

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God's call upon the lives of the prophets didn't come with the promise of peace and prosperity or the guarantee that anyone would want to listen to their words. And Jeremiah wasn't afraid to be honest with God about the inhospitable working conditions he endured. The word of God had taken over his body so that the prophetic warning of violence and destruction was always on his lips. Jeremiah wanted to stop preaching, but the words were like a fire that could not be contained. As others heard Jeremiah's prophecy of doom and gloom, the words burned up his reputation and destroyed his body.

No matter our specific vocation, we know from experience that the call of God compels us to diverge from the path of least resistance. As the love of God fills our bodies, we can no longer be silent to the forces of death and unrighteousness in our world. We become disillusioned with the way things are, and a passion to make things right ignites within us. Sometimes we encounter outside resistance, but prophetic voices often encounter more painful resistance from within the Christian community.

There is no more appropriate time than Lent to confess our struggles to God honestly. When we hold these feelings in, we risk burnout. But when we, like Jeremiah, are blunt with God, the weight of the message's efficacy is lifted from our shoulders. We're reminded that we are vessels of God's word. The word itself and the work of transformation are God's.

### **PRAYER**

Out of the depths we cry to you, O Lord. You have placed causes and concerns deep in our hearts, yet the world has told us to be silent. As your prophetic word burns inside us, give us also your words of grace. Renew us, strengthen us, and equip us to be your servants, now and to the end of the age. Teach us once again to sing your praises, all the while knowing that you will succeed in bringing justice and righteousness to our world. Amen.