

A reading from the book of the prophet Jeremiah.

Pause – and look up at the assembly

Jeremiah cried out:
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.”
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 dishonour
will never be forgotten.
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.
Sing to the Lord;
praise the Lord!
For he has delivered the life of the needy
from the hands of evildoers.

PAUSE for **THREE** seconds
then look up at the people
and say SLOWLY:



The WORD of the LORD.

Thanks be to God.

SECOND READING – A 12

A reading from the letter of Saint Paul to the Romans.

Pause – and look up at the assembly

Brothers and sisters:

Just as sin came into the world through one man,
and death came through sin,
so death spread to all because all have sinned.

Sin was indeed in the world before the law,
but sin is not reckoned when there is no law.

Yet death exercised dominion from Adam to Moses,
even over those whose sins were not like the disobedience of Adam,
who is a type of the one who was to come.

But the free gift is not like the trespass.

For if the many died through the one man's trespass,
much more surely have the grace of God
and the free gift in the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ,
abounded for the many.



PAUSE for **THREE** seconds
then look up at the people
and say SLOWLY:

The WORD of the LORD.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL READING – A 12

The Lord be with you.

And with your spirit.

A reading from the holy gospel according to Matthew.

Glory to you, O Lord

Jesus said to his Apostles:

“Fear no one;
for nothing is covered up that will not be uncovered,
and nothing secret that will not become known.
What I say to you in the dark, tell in the light;
and what you hear whispered, proclaim from the housetops.
Do not fear those who kill the body
but cannot kill the soul;
rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.
Are not two sparrows sold for a penny?
Yet not one of them will fall to the ground
apart from your Father.
And even the hairs of your head are all counted.
So do not be afraid;
you are of more value than many sparrows.
Everyone therefore who acknowledges me before humans,
I also will acknowledge before my Father in heaven;
but whoever denies me before humans,
I also will deny before my Father in heaven.”



The GOSPEL of the LORD.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

SCRIPTURES IN DEPTH

Reading I: Jeremiah 20:10-13

This reading has clearly been chosen to match the Gospel, which speaks of the persecution that the apostles will encounter on their mission. Jeremiah was preeminently the prophet who suffered persecution because of his prophetic activity.

His fate influenced the development of the later Jewish view that rejection, persecution, and martyrdom were inseparable from the prophetic vocation, a view echoed in a number of dominical sayings ([Lk 11:51](#); [Lk 13:33-34](#); [Mk 12:1-9](#)).

To be a bearer of the word of God means to suffer, because that word inevitably encounters hostility and rejection.

It is illuminating that apparently, according to the sayings of the Lord referred to above, Jesus regarded his own fate as the culmination of the rejection of the prophets and their message.

But it was Paul, more than any other New Testament figure, who regarded Jeremiah as a model for his own apostleship.

Certainly Paul regarded suffering as the supreme manifestation of the cross in his own apostolic ministry (see especially the catalogues of his sufferings in Second Corinthians [[2 Cor 4:7-12](#); [2 Cor 6:3-10](#); [2 Cor 11:22-33](#)]).

Responsorial Psalm: 69:8-10, 14, 17, 33-35

Psalm 69 is one of the great passion psalms of the Old Testament, second only to Psalm 22 in its influence upon the passion narratives of the Gospels. The final couplet of the first stanza of this responsorial psalm is cited by the Fourth Gospel ([John 2:17](#)) in connection with the cleansing of the temple. If the Church applied it to the Lord's passion, it is equally applicable to the fate of Jeremiah in today's liturgy.

Reading II: Romans 5:12-15

In [Romans 5-8](#), Paul is expounding the liberating effect of Christ's redemptive deed—it brings freedom from wrath, from sin, from the law as a means of salvation, and from death.

Here the Apostle enunciates our liberation from sin and death by a comparison of Christ and Adam. Each wrought a deed with momentous consequences.

<i>Adam</i>		<i>Christ</i>	
Disobedience (= trespass)		Obedience (death on the cross)	
sin	} spreading to the many	free gift, grace	{
death		life	

Although there is an antithetical correspondence (Adam is called the "type" of Christ), the correspondence is transcended in a "much more."

The caption at the head of the reading is unfortunately ambiguous: "God's gift to us is nothing like our sin against him." This could suggest that our sin is much greater than God's grace.

But Paul means it the other way around: God's grace is much greater than our sin.

It was easy enough to introduce sin and death upon the *tabula rasa* of human life, but much more difficult to eradicate them after they had been introduced.

We have to guard against reading later theological ideas into Paul's statement about the fall. He does not say that Adam introduced into human life a hereditary trait that is henceforth transmitted biologically.

Death, we are told, spread to all members of the human race, not because Adam sinned or because they sinned "in Adam," but because all sinned like Adam.

Adam, as it were, opened the door to sin and death; ever since, sin and death have been prowling around, and all persons have fallen under their clutches because they have succumbed to sin. Adam created the environment in which all would sin and would therefore come under the dominion of death.

Nor must we interpret the passage so as to mean that physical death is, in a crude and mechanical sort of way, a punishment for sin, even for actual sin. (If it is punishment for "original sin," such a view is even more deterministic, and ultimately Gnostic.)

Rather, "death" is to be understood theologically as the *theological consequence* of sin. Death means separation from God, and separation is the consequence of sin. Physical death is not a punishment but a biological inevitability.

For human beings, however, it is existentially the final revelation of their utter aloneness in a world in which they have cut themselves off from God by sin.

Gospel: Matthew 10:26-33

This is a continuation of the Matthean missionary charge to the Twelve, the beginning of which we read last week. As already indicated, this is a challenge to fearless proclamation in the face of persecution and an assurance of God's care for his witnesses and of their ultimate vindication.

The first saying ("nothing is covered") occurs in various contexts in the Synoptists. Here it is applied to the apostolic preaching. Its original application (see Mark) was probably eschatological: the kingdom of God, which is operative in a hidden way in Jesus' ministry, will at the end be made visible to all who see.

Matthew is rather fond of the body/soul contrast, which is not typical of Scripture. It represents popular Hellenistic language, not a systematically thought-out anthropology.

Who is the one who can cast into Gehenna (RSV: "hell")? The Father? Christ? Satan? All three interpretations have found their advocates.

The context, however, suggests that Matthew refers it to the Father, for it is the Father who is able to let the sparrows fall to the ground. The protection of the witnesses is contingent upon their faithful testimony.

"You are of more value" is not a general statement about the value of human personality; it is an assurance for the messengers. While they are on duty delivering their message, they will be guarded, but even this does not exclude martyrdom. One way or another, the message will be delivered. That is what is important.

In other synoptic versions of the final saying (v. 33), a distinction is drawn between Jesus and the Son of man, though the relation between the two figures is one of functional identity.

For the earlier tradition, Jesus was a figure on earth, and the Son of man was a transcendent figure in

heaven. The resurrection revealed their identity, and Matthew carries this to its logical conclusion by substituting “I” for the Son of man on the transcendent side.

The apostle’s testimony on earth, whether given or shirked, will determine his fate at the end.

The whole section is an exhortation to faithful and courageous testimony even in the face of suffering and persecution, presumably a very relevant message for Matthew’s Church.

Reginald H. Fuller