



Twenty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time
† Sunday 3rd September 2017

In England and Wales Cycle of Prayer:

For the spread of the Gospel, the harvest

Keynote: The faithful servant of God gives all in service

Prophet Jeremiah 20:7-9

The prophet Jeremiah has been sent by God to *'root up and to tear down, to build and to plant.'* But so far God's message, as proclaimed by the prophet, has only been negative, and badly received by those in authority who beat him and put the prophet in the stocks to be a 'laughing stock' among the townspeople. Jeremiah feels that he has been duped by God, *'You have seduced me, Lord, and I have let myself be seduced; you have overpowered me... I am a daily laughing-stock, everybody's butt... the word of the Lord has meant for me insult, derision, all day long.'* Having dedicated his life to the Lord's purpose Jeremiah in a moment of weakness resolved: *'I will not think about him, I will not to speak in his name any more.'* But it was not so easy to reject his God-given mission, *'then there seemed to be a fire burning in my heart, imprisoned in my bones. The effort to restrain it wearied me, I could not bear it.'* All those who would be faithful servants of God may take some comfort in the experience of this prophet, if they encounter rejection or hurt, and let God's word still burn like fire in their hearts.

Responsorial Psalm 62 [63] – The psalmist sings of the longing for God

Letter of Paul to the Romans 12:1-2

'Think of God's mercy, my brothers, and worship him, I beg you in a way that is worthy of thinking beings, by offering your living bodies as a holy sacrifice, truly pleasing to God.' So Paul writes to the faithful of the Church in Rome urging them: *'Do not model yourselves on the behaviour of the world around you.'* Frankly, these words are still relevant to us today. Like the Christians of Rome we might heed the words of Paul, *'let your behaviour change, modelled by your new mind. This is the only way to discover the will of God and know what is good, what it is that God wants, what is the perfect thing to do.'* In this way the servants of the Lord in this day and age may offer their *'living bodies as a holy sacrifice, truly pleasing to God.'*

Gospel according to Matthew 16:21-27

'Jesus began to make it clear to his disciples that he was destined to go to Jerusalem and suffer grievously at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes, to be put to death and to be raised up on the third day.' When Jesus speaks with his disciples, he speaks to each of us, *'If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let him renounce self and take up the cross and follow me. Anyone who wants to save their life will lose it, but anyone who loses life for my sake will find it.'* As we reflect today on the cost to us of being faithful servants, we know in our heart of hearts that we are not likely either to *'win the whole world'* or have that kind of earthly reward. Instead, we are called to renounce ourselves, to put aside earthly ambition, and to lose our life in God's service in order in the end to find it. *'The Son of Man is going to come in the glory of the Father,'* says Jesus, *'when he does, God will reward each one according to their behaviour.'*