

Sunday, September 19, 2021 – Seventeen Sunday after Pentecost

When have you most felt in danger and at risk?

What were the circumstances that made you feel that way?

How was God able to help you?

Jeremiah lived during the time leading up to, at the time of, and after the time of the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians and the deportation of most of the people.

The introduction to Psalm 54 tells us that David wrote this Psalm "when the Ziphites went and told Saul, 'David is hiding among us.'"

First Reading: Jeremiah 11:18-20

18 - It was the LORD who made it known to me; you showed me their evil deeds.

19 - I was like a gentle lamb led to the slaughter.

I did not know it was against me that they devised schemes.

20 - But you, O LORD of hosts, who judge righteously, to you I have committed my cause.

Psalm: Psalm 54

1 - Save me, O God, by your name; in your might, defend my cause.

3 - Strangers have risen up against me, and the ruthless have sought my life.

4 - Behold, God is my helper; it is the Lord who sustains my life.

7 - You have rescued me from every trouble.

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Second Reading: James 3:13--4:3, 7-8a

3: 14 - If you have bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not be boastful and false to the truth.

3: 15 - Such wisdom does not come down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, devilish.

3: 16 - For where there is envy and selfish ambition, there will also be disorder and wickedness of every kind.

4: 1 - Those conflicts and disputes among you, where do they come from? Do they not come from your cravings that are at war within you?

4: 2 - You want something and do not have it; so you commit murder. And you covet something and cannot obtain it; so you engage in disputes and conflicts.

4: 3 - You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, in order to spend what you get on your pleasures.

4: 7 - Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

4: 8 - Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you.

Cf. Matthew 4: 11 – Then the devil left him, and suddenly angels came and waited on him.

Vs. Luke 4: 13 – When the devil had finished every test, he departed from him until an opportune time.

Cf. If you do not feel close to God, guess who moved.

John 4: 23 – "The Father seeks those who worship him in spirit and in truth."

If God feels far away, just start worshipping Him, and He will come looking for you.

Gospel: Mark 9:30-37

31 - (As Jesus and his disciples were passing through Galilee), he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, "The Son of Man is to be betrayed into human hands, and they will kill him, and three days after being killed, he will rise again."

32 - But they did not understand what he was saying and were afraid to ask him.

This is in spite of the fact that shortly before – in the previous chapter – in Mark 8: 31 – Jesus was telling them the same thing.

33 - Then they came to Capernaum; and when he was in the house he asked them, "What were you arguing about on the way?"

34 - But they were silent, for on the way they had argued with one another who was the greatest.

35 - He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, "Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all."

Some things are worth arguing about, while other things are not worth arguing about.

How would you describe most of your arguments?

Are most of your arguments about things worth arguing about?

If you are going to have an argument, make sure it is about something worth arguing about.

You can tell a lot about the size of people by the size of what they let get to them.

You can tell a lot about people by the kinds of things they argue about.

When have you, like the disciples, been embarrassed by the kinds of things you argue about?

The disciples were caught red-handed, carrying on an argument over which of them was the greatest in the presence of Him who is the greatest.

In the presence of Jesus their arguments were pretty small and petty and worthless.

Just think about how much it must have hurt Jesus to hear His disciples arguing about which one of them is the greatest.

In our arguments – in our I'm-going-to-win-by-making-you-lose type arguments, we hurt other people, and we hurt our Lord.

How does Jesus deal with His arguing disciples?

He does not blast them with burning words, even though He certainly had reason and right to.

Rather He asked them a simple question, "What were you arguing about on the way?"

And He turned it into a teaching moment.

He sat down and said to them, "Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all."

The solution for worthless arguments does not come from stopping talking.

Rather it comes from discussing things that are worth discussing,

dealing with issues rather than attacking persons,

and becoming a servant to other people.

Give ten cents worth of time and energy to a ten-cent issue,

ten dollars worth of time and energy to a ten-dollar issue,

and a hundred dollars worth of time and energy only to one hundred dollar-issues.