



The words of the Prophet Jeremiah take on a whole new meaning when spoken in the context of our world, and nation today.

Days in which we feel a thirst for what is right, as, *“violence and outrage surround us,”* and God’s word itself is used to justify lies, and separation, as too many think *“not as God does, but as human beings do.”* God’s command to *“love your neighbor as yourself”* is reduced to *“love my neighbor who is like myself.”*

God’s word is filled with controversy. It challenges the terror of a war unleashed with reckless abandon, it names every outrage of the day, each act of violence against any neighbor, and always takes the side of the oppressed, maltreated, unwelcomed and *“those who labor and are burdened.”*

To speak that word of truth and compassion, as we know and feel too well, will bring *“derision and reproach all day,”* even from some who claim to follow Christ. Like Jeremiah, it is easy to feel discouraged, alone, exhausted, and confused. For all the words spoken, all the prayer prayed and the long journey made, too much seems not to have changed. Like Jeremiah we too could feel *“duped”* as we witness again and again the *“violence and outrage”* of each day, wondering

where God is. Our spirit can become *“parched, lifeless and without water.”*

Still, there are moments as our soulful spirit thirsts for God, as there were for Jeremiah, when the vision of faith, the caring love of so many, and the promise of God’s word *“becomes like a fire burning in our heart and imprisoned in our bones; a vision and promise so vibrant that we grow weary holding it in...;”* so strong, as we witness so many neighbors suffer, that we cannot endure silence; so refreshing that we gaze upon God in the sanctuary of earthly human life.

So it was, and is, with Jesus: God’s way of compassion is not just a spoken word, but a way of living and doing in the “sanctuary” of the real world of today. Lived and acted upon because we cannot hold it in, we cannot be silent, even if it means the risk of becoming an *“object of laughter,”* mocked as being naïve.

God’s word, made flesh in Jesus and now in us, compels us *“to comfort those who labor and are burdened,”* and commands us to *“stand as a living witness to truth and freedom; to justice and peace, that all people may be raised up by the hope of a world made new.”* It demands that we see, hear and feel the trauma, the loss, the struggle, close to home and far away. Deliberate and active compassion for all and every neighbor, is not an option for souls who thirst for God, whose heart burns with faith. We look and see; we hear and listen; ***we must be compassion.***

But compassion is not enough, we will grow weary holding it in. We must speak, act, and be *“counted now and until the day of eternity”* with all who suffer, refusing to let ourselves be duped, even if our voice brings *“derision and reproach, all the day.”*

It is daring, as Jesus reminds us, to think like God and not as human beings think. Daring to remember that such thinking and acting often brings *"derision and reproach all the day."* Truth is easily mocked and ridiculed.

This is the cross of our day; the cross we are challenged to embrace, carry and hold, as we choose to follow Christ, who like Jerimiah was an object of laughter, one who was and is still mocked.

This is the cross we are given, the cross we take up today, the cross we carry to follow Christ, the way we, who come to the Table, are to live and act.

The Holy Cross, carried in our world, nation and community today, has power to enflame our hearts anew. It is a promise imprisoned in our bones, a promise, let us hope, we become finally weary of holding in.

"MY SOUL IS THIRSTING FOR YOU, O LORD..."
SO TOO IS THE SOUL OF THE WORLD.

