

**Lessons for The Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost**

**September 3, 2023**

Psalm 26 ~ *David's prayer for God's mercy, vindicating him from deceitful men and delivering him from evil men.*

Jeremiah 15:15–21 ~ *The Lord's words called the people of Jerusalem back to God's ways.*

Romans 12:9–21 ~ *Even when others discourage us, we are to encourage them by repaying evil with good.*

Matthew 16:21–28 ~ *Peter wanted to spare Jesus suffering, but Jesus headed for the cross to provide us Life.*

**GATHERING THE TEXTS:** God's Lessons in Encouragement.

Jeremiah was fed up with the words God had given him to proclaim! Instead of winning friends, he was making enemies, but still God said, "Let this people turn to you, but you must not turn to them." St. Paul gave some very specific examples of how we should encourage others even in the face of the many discouraging ways of this world. St. Peter had trouble telling when to encourage and when to confront. He learned a hard lesson about God's will and human ways: life in Christ is about something much greater than any of us.

**PRAYER BEFORE THE SERVICE:** Faithful Lord Jesus, you have called me to follow you in service because you gave your life that I may live. When I feel discouraged in the task, reassure me with your strong word and perfect will. Let me use my gifts to give God glory, spending myself for others until I receive the gift of eternity in your presence. Amen.

**STEWARDSHIP THOUGHT:** We are able to give ourselves in service to God and neighbor because we have the assurance of God's greater gifts to support us in body and in spirit.

**OFFERING PRAYER:** O Lord, You call us to the higher path of peace,  
To use our life and daily goods to foster love,  
So as we spend ourselves to meet our neighbors' needs,  
Assure us of Your grace; sustain us from above. Amen.

**CONVICTION AND COMFORT:** We find it so hard to give up our claim on vengeance when we think we have been wronged. Indeed, Satan even uses us to urge others to "get even." Because God has promised to mete out just payments even for wrongs against us, we should leave it in His hands. That means we should expect justice for the wrongs we have inflicted on others! Thanks be to God, Jesus set His mind on the things of God to win life for us even in the face of God's justice.

**Questions to Consider:** When does encouragement become a hindrance?

- If your friends have been wronged, would you encourage them to "give as good as you get?"
- When you seek vengeance in order to get even, do you ever stop when you are even?
- How does St. Paul say we should get even for evil done to us?
- If we leave vengeance in God's hands, how can we ever hope for grace?