

# livingtheword

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hearing and living the Sunday Readings

## Reading 1

2 Chr 36:14-16, 19-23

In those days, all the princes of Judah, the priests, and the people added infidelity to infidelity, practicing all the abominations of the nations and polluting the LORD's temple which he had consecrated in Jerusalem.

Early and often did the LORD, the God of their fathers, send his messengers to them, for he had compassion on his people and his dwelling place.

But they mocked the messengers of God, despised his warnings, and scoffed at his prophets, until the anger of the LORD against his people was so inflamed that there was no remedy.

Their enemies burnt the house of God, tore down the walls of Jerusalem, set all its palaces afire, and destroyed all its precious objects. Those who escaped the sword were carried captive to Babylon, where they became servants of the king of the Chaldeans and his sons until the kingdom of the Persians came to power.

All this was to fulfill the word of the LORD spoken by Jeremiah:

"Until the land has retrieved its lost sabbaths, during all the time it lies waste it shall have rest while seventy years are fulfilled."

In the first year of Cyrus, king of Persia, in order to fulfill the word of the LORD spoken by Jeremiah, the LORD inspired King Cyrus of Persia to issue this proclamation throughout his kingdom, both by word of mouth and in writing: "Thus says Cyrus, king of Persia:

All the kingdoms of the earth the LORD, the God of heaven, has given to me, and he has also charged me to build him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever, therefore, among you belongs to any part of his people, let him go up, and may his God be with him!"

## Responsorial Psalm

Ps 137:1-2, 3, 4-5, 6

R. (6ab) Let my tongue be silenced, if I ever forget you!

By the streams of Babylon we sat and wept when we remembered Zion.

On the aspens of that land we hung up our harps.

R. Let my tongue be silenced, if I ever forget you!

For there our captors asked of us the lyrics of our songs,

And our despoilers urged us to be joyous: "Sing for us the songs of Zion!"

R. Let my tongue be silenced, if I ever forget you!

How could we sing a song of the LORD in a foreign land?

If I forget you, Jerusalem, may my right hand be forgotten!

R. Let my tongue be silenced, if I ever forget you!

May my tongue cleave to my palate if I remember you not,

If I place not Jerusalem ahead of my joy.

R. Let my tongue be silenced, if I ever forget you!

Reading II  
Eph 2:4-10

God loved us with so much love that he was generous with his mercy: when we were dead through our sins, he brought us to life with Christ - it is through grace that you have been saved - and raised us up with him and gave us place with him in heaven, in Christ Jesus.

this was to show for all ages to come, through his goodness towards us in Christ Jesus, how infinitely rich he is in grace. Because it is by grace that you have been saved, through faith; not by anything of your own, but by a gift from God; not by anything that you have done, so that nobody can claim the credit. We are God's work of art, created in Christ Jesus to live the good life as from the beginning he had meant us to live it.

Gospel  
Jn 3:14-21

Jesus said to Nicodemus:  
"Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, so that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life."

For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life.  
For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him will not be condemned, but whoever does not believe has already been condemned, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.  
And this is the verdict, that the light came into the world, but people preferred darkness to light, because their works were evil.  
For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come toward the light, so that his works might not be exposed.  
But whoever lives the truth comes to the light, so that his works may be clearly seen as done in God.

### Reflection Questions

- What word, phrase or idea struck you in the reading?
- What do you think God is trying to say to you personally?
- God's people suffered the destruction of their Temple in Jerusalem and were exiled into another country for 70 years. Something had gone horribly wrong. Wasn't God supposed to provide them with unconditional protection? Have you had an experience of feeling abandoned or being forgotten by God? What caused that experience? The first reading shares the idea of false worship.
- God's guidance of history stirs a secular leader, Cyrus King of Persia, to rebuild the Temple. What does this teach us about God? About my situation?
- John 3:16 is a popular line in the scriptures to summarise God's love for us "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son." It is linked with the Gospel image of Jesus being 'lifted up'. Locate a crucifix to pray with or go into a church and ponder Jesus on the Cross. Consider reflecting on the idea: "I am incredibly loveable and God is incredibly loving!"
- The discussion with Nicodemus in the darkness of night is symbolic. Nicodemus wants to protect his reputation and not be exposed. Is there something I feel called to bring to the light of reconciliation during this time of Lent?
- What is one action that you will do to 'livetheword' this week?