

*O Lord, you have deceived me and I was deceived; you are stronger than I, and you have prevailed. I have become a laughingstock all the day; everyone mocks me. For whenever I speak, I cry out, I shout, 'Violence and destruction!' For the word of the Lord has become for me a reproach and derision all the day long. Jeremiah 20:7-8.*

The vocation of the prophets is not a straightforward one. We might imagine that there is a certain glory in being a spokesperson for God, but Jeremiah has a more realistic view of his calling. His message has not been an easy one to tell, for he has warned of the destruction of Jerusalem, and has been proclaiming judgement and the need for repentance. "Don't shoot the messenger" we say if we tell difficult news, but Jeremiah (and many of the prophets) experience marginalization, unpopularity, rejection, misunderstanding and loneliness. He rails against God for giving him this task, "You have deceived me" he says, though he remains steadfast. The prophets are a sign that we cannot mould God to suit ourselves, and his word is sometimes challenging and uncomfortable.

Even in this experience God is preparing the way for his Messiah, and there's a pointer here to what Jesus himself will face. He is met by hostility and rejection but always chooses the will of the Father. Do you feel that your faith in God sometimes isolates you from others?

God our Father, you spoke through the prophets of old of a Saviour who would bring peace. Help us, as we prepare to celebrate his birth, to share with those around us the good news of your power and love. We ask this through Jesus Christ, the light who is coming into the world.