

MARCH 4, 2026 FATHER PETER JAE CHOI

When Jesus went from one village to another village, he cured so many people. And people kept coming to him bringing their loved ones. The only exception was when Jesus went to his own hometown. People from his own town scoffed at him and complained. That's when Jesus said to his disciples, as a warning, no prophet is accepted in his hometown.

To put it in another way, a saying I heard sometime ago, "You can tell who the pioneers are by the number of arrows on their backs." The saying originated from innovators having to face their challenges and having to pay a heavy penalty for their failures. But the way I related to this quote is that we often find people being so nice to us until we challenge them.

When we are trying to do the right thing, and even if what we are doing will eventually be helping them in the end, people can still often feel threatened. They will not only get their backs up, but they will put up a fight.

When St. Teresa of Avila saw a lukewarm, worldly, and comfortable lifestyle creeping into many convents, she collaborated with St. John of the Cross to bring reform. She wanted to emphasize poverty and deeper prayer life, but the efforts were met with violent opposition. The Carmelite friars imprisoned St. John of the Cross, and St. Teresa of Avila had to travel under the cover of the night to avoid a hostile crowd. That's when St. Teresa of Avila famously said to Jesus, "If this is how you treat your friends, no wonder you have so few."

We are creatures of habit, we want to keep doing what we've always been doing. Not many decide to walk the chosen path. That is why when we do God's will, it can sometimes make us feel alone.

This is a situation Prophet Jeremiah found himself in. When he prophesied judgement against the people of Judah for their adultery and moral corruption, and urged people to repent and to return to God, instead of listening to him, some people came together and conspired to kill him. Having to stand alone against those who opposed him was extremely lonely and painful for him.

Of course, God wasn't being mean to prophet Jeremiah, nor was he being mean to St. Teresa by asking them to perform impossible tasks. Who said doing the right thing was going to be easy?

When we try to do good, our efforts will not always be met with a crowd of supporters cheering us on. When Jesus prophesied about his impending passion and then death, I'm sure what Jesus said made his disciples uncomfortable to hear. How could he be condemned to death? Why would he allow himself to be handed over to the gentiles to be scourged and crucified?

I'm sure when Jesus revealed his playbook his disciples not only didn't understand him but they also didn't listen to him. They didn't listen to Jesus saying that he will rise from the dead on the third day. His passion and death wasn't God being blindsided. He knew the religious authorities' plans. He was going to surrender and make use of their plan of action to destroy sin and death.

While Jesus was talking about what he was going to do, James and John got sidetracked. They wanted worldly ambition. They wanted to be positioned in the seat of honour and glory, so their mom advocated for

them. This request to be elevated to a high position in God's kingdom bothered the other disciples, and they became angry.

Could it be that although they didn't exactly spell it out, but they too were secretly desiring the same thing in their hearts?

Can we just love God and commit to doing God's will while detaching ourselves from the rewards that come after? Can love be the motivation for doing God's will instead of being motivated by what we can get out from serving God?

The difference is at work doing our job gets us a paycheque, but when we live out our vocation, we don't get a paycheque. Loving and serving others is itself our greatest reward because love not only enriches our lives, it makes us who we are. Loving God, our family and our neighbours makes us true Christians, good fathers, and good mothers.

When I think of my father, two things that come to my mind are power and money. They were important for him. When my father was in his 30s he became a successful businessman in Korea. He enjoyed special privileges like having a special government pass that allowed him to travel during restricted hours when the national curfew was in place. That's when he got hooked on lures of money and power.

He still chased after them when he lived in Canada. He knew how to make money, and he worked very hard for it. But, unfortunately, he didn't know how to spend it. He didn't understand the joy of sharing with others. When he declared bankruptcy and lost everything, I truly believe he began a journey of finding himself.

That's when he realized that you don't need money to make you rich. It is not things but relationships that make us rich. Those who have love

have the ability to share with others. And where do we get this love from? God.

Jesus taught us that to love is to serve. I heard when Mother Teresa sent sisters away to study and return with degrees as doctors, they wanted to be called by their title and have their own offices. That's when Mother Teresa would make them work in the home for the dying, to provide comfort for dying patients. Just to sit and hold hands of dying patients. She learned that when they did that for about six months then they're ready to be servants again.

Mother Teresa said, "If we pray, we will believe. If we believe, we will love. If we love, we will serve. Being servants of God is our vocation, and it is our greatest vocation because love enriches the world."