

Jesus' stinging rebuke to Peter forces our attention to a potential clash between what we as disciples may want to do for Jesus, and what God's purposes may demand of us. Peter was so sure he knew what was right for his friend and the cause they both served. He was oblivious to the part his sense of self-preservation played in his response. Do we ever find ourselves in comparable situations, situations where we've lost sight of how much we are consulting our own desires, or our need to look good? Sometimes, like Peter, do we need to be brought up short to ask how much our sense of what we, or other people, 'ought' to be doing as Christians comes not from the Gospel imperative but from our human need to be comfortable?

To look at it another way, passion like that which inspired Peter's insight when he recognised Jesus as Messiah (last week's reading) can also be a liability. If we follow Jesus, we can't place conditions on it, even though our human weakness may want us to. Still less can we try to control Jesus, or the direction others are led in by their convictions and commitment. Yet, we have to find solidarity behind the kingdom purposes, reclaiming the wayward. How do we support each other in making the right choices in difficult places? Mere humans will, from time to time, get it wrong but, as we see in the Jeremiah reading, there is always a way back to God. How do we find it? Do we, like Jeremiah, find it difficult to see God's way when it threatens our comfort? The Gospel reading can help us to explore the community dynamic that draws the wayward in.