

## THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 15

*For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will save it. What does it profit them if they gain the whole world, but lose or forfeit themselves?*

*Luke 9:24–25*



On this Thursday after Ash Wednesday, Scripture offers us rich and complicated fare about life and death. Beginning with Deuteronomy 30:15, God describes two paths: “I have set before you today life and prosperity, death and adversity.” In Psalm 1:3–4, we hear that those who follow the Law will be like “trees planted by streams of water,” whereas those who walk in the counsel of the wicked are “chaff which the wind blows away.”

Such texts rely on strong contrasts. On one side is life and prosperity. On the other side, there is death and adversity. The starkness of the contrasts—their light and shadow—make the final reading even more remarkable

because Jesus’ message of the cross complicates this polarized vision of reality.

Jesus, after all, relishes a provocative paradox.

In Luke 9:24, Jesus states, “Those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will save it.” Once again, Scripture presents life and death, but this time, gaining the whole world (power, prestige, etc.) is presented as the chaff that blows away, while the bewildering fact of a shameful crucifixion becomes the seed of new life.

### **Today’s readings**

Psalm 1 | Deuteronomy 30:15–20 | Luke 9:18–25

*It is easy, at times, to miss the strange and paradoxical message of the cross. What does it mean to lose one’s life for God’s sake today?*

*How might the way of the cross be a beginning rather than an end?*