

## LOVE ,LOVE, LOVE

Fourth Sunday after Epiphany  
Jeremiah 1:4-10  
1 Cor 13:1-13  
Luke 4:21-30

**Love, Love ,Love, Love  
Christians, this is your call  
Love your neighbor as yourself  
For God loves us all**

I'm sure God loves us all, but I am guessing from our Gospel this morning, the folks in Jesus' hometown synagogue weren't loving him so much. Can you imagine giving your first sermon in your hometown church, the local carpenter hoping for at least a "good job". What did he get, a lynch mob, ready to toss him over a cliff.

**In last week's reading**, Jesus announced the inauguration of his ministry with a synagogue reading from Isaiah and the assertion that there is good news for the poor, release for captives, sight for the blind, and freedom from oppression. He finished up by proclaiming that this was the years of God's favor and that today this anticipated prophecy was being fulfilled in their hearing. Jesus points to himself as the fulfillment of the prophecy and as the one able to offer salvation to all who hear him. Such salvation should be understood broadly as God's work through Jesus with special attention given to those who are marginalized.

When we think about our own proclamation of the good news of Jesus, we might ask ourselves "Is our message good news for the poor? For the captive? For the oppressed? Does our proclamation envision that *all* can be saved?"

If our message is not as broad as Jesus' message, then we must ask "How can we proclaim the good news of Jesus so that it is good news for the very people whom Jesus pointed towards in his announcement of the gospel?"

**In this week's reading** we find out what the synagogue audience thought of Jesus' first sermon. Notice how the whole group reacts as one. *All* who witness this message respond in the same way, with wonder -- with admiration or amazement. Can you hear the synagogue buzzing with the voices of those saying, "Wow, what amazing news. Isn't this Joseph's son?" Jesus interrupts the wondering voices with a second proclamation.

*The crowd must have been thinking*, "Well, if you are the fulfillment of this amazing proclamation of good news, then show us signs that this is the case." The crowd wants Jesus to do the same miracles in Nazareth that he did in Capernaum. There may be some rivalry between the towns but most likely the people of Nazareth feel that the hometown son should show them special favor and consideration, especially if he is the messenger and fulfillment of such good news.

Jesus continues his proclamation saying, "No prophet is acceptable in his home country". For the first time in Luke, Jesus is identified as a prophet, but this will bring rejection rather than acceptance in the place where he is well known.

Jesus continues his proclamation by alluding to two famous prophets: Elijah and Elisha. Of all the stories about these two famous prophets, he picks two about prophetic ministry to people who were not part of the people of Israel -- ministry done on behalf of those who are not part of the hometown crowd. The implication is that Jesus too has a ministry that is directed at those beyond the borders of his hometown. Once again, Luke is reminding his

readers that Jesus' ministry is available to all -- in Luke's gospel there is an emphasis on salvation for both the Jew and the Gentile.

And here in Jesus' initial proclamation of good news, he makes it clear that he will not be a prophet who serves the special interests of his hometown but rather a messenger of good news for the whole world and especially the vulnerable.

Just as in the first response, *all* of them have the same reaction. The hometown crowd is full of anger. They heard Jesus proclaim good news; they want proof (in the form of signs) that Jesus is the prophet he claims to be; and they hear, with anger, his declaration that his ministry is directed to ALL. So, they respond with anger, and as a group they rise up and try to kill him.

In many ways this is a foreshadowing of the way that Jesus' ministry will unfold in the years ahead Jesus' proclamation of a kingdom in which the poor inherit a kingdom, in which the hungry are filled, and in which the rich and full are pulled down ultimately will lead him to the cross.

But for now, just as Jesus came to the synagogue with a proclamation of good news, so now he goes away and in the verses that follow we find Jesus continuing to teach and heal in the places that he goes.

Perhaps the most interesting part of this passage is that Jesus does not do any miracles in his hometown. Why should they not receive a little benefit from Jesus' ministry.

Do we feel entitled to the work of Jesus among us? Do we think that Jesus should do ministry for the church first? Or, do we share with Jesus his concern for the marginalized and vulnerable and for those beyond the boundaries of our local congregation?

In Presiding Bishop Michael Curry's invitation to Practice the Way of Love, Reverend Karen continues to offer on Wednesday evenings, "The Way of Love" series, with practices for a Jesus Centered Life. The course encourages us to cross boundaries, listen deeply and live like Jesus.

As Jesus went to the highways and byways, he sends us beyond our circles and comfort to witness to love, justice, and truth of God with our lips and with our lives. We go to listen with humility and to join God in healing a hurting world. We go to become a Beloved Community, a people reconciled in love and God and one another.

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