

Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time – January 31, 2010 – Good Shepherd Parish

Scripture Reading: Jeremiah 1:4-5, 17-19

The word of the LORD came to me, saying: Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I dedicated you, a prophet to the nations I appointed you. But do you gird your loins; stand up and tell them all that I command you. Be not crushed on their account, as though I would leave you crushed before them; for it is I this day who have made you a fortified city, a pillar of iron, a wall of brass, against the whole land: against Judah's kings and princes, against its priests and people. They will fight against you but not prevail over you, for I am with you to deliver you, says the LORD.

Responsorial Psalm: Ps 71:1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 15-17

(cf. 15ab) **I will sing of your salvation.**

In you, O LORD, I take refuge;
let me never be put to shame.
In your justice rescue me, and deliver me;
incline your ear to me, and save me.

I will sing of your salvation.

Be my rock of refuge,
a stronghold to give me safety,
for you are my rock and my fortress.
O my God, rescue me from the hand of the wicked.

I will sing of your salvation.

For you are my hope, O Lord;
my trust, O God, from my youth.
On you I depend from birth;
from my mother's womb you are my strength.

I will sing of your salvation.

My mouth shall declare your justice,
day by day your salvation.
O God, you have taught me from my youth,
and till the present I proclaim your wondrous deeds.

I will sing of your salvation.

Scripture Reading: 1 Corinthians 12:31—13:13

Brothers and sisters: Strive eagerly for the greatest spiritual gifts. But I shall show you a still more excellent way. If I speak in human and angelic tongues, but do not have love, I am a resounding gong or a clashing cymbal. And if I have the gift of prophecy, and comprehend all mysteries and all knowledge; if I have all faith so as to move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give away everything I own, and if I hand my body over so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

Love is patient, love is kind.

It is not jealous, it is not pompous,
It is not inflated, it is not rude,
it does not seek its own interests,
it is not quick-tempered, it does not brood over injury,
it does not rejoice over wrongdoing
but rejoices with the truth.
It bears all things, believes all things,
hopes all things, endures all things.

Love never fails. If there are prophecies, they will be brought to nothing; if tongues, they will cease; if knowledge, it will be brought to nothing. For we know partially and we prophesy partially, but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away. When I was a child, I used to talk as a child, think as a child, reason as a child; when I became a man, I put aside childish things. At present we see indistinctly, as in a mirror, but then face to face. At present I know partially; then I shall know fully, as I am fully known. So faith, hope, love remain, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

Gospel: Luke 4:21-30

Jesus began speaking in the synagogue, saying: "Today this Scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing." And all spoke highly of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth. They also asked, "Isn't this the son of Joseph?" He said to them, "Surely you will quote me this proverb, 'Physician, cure yourself,' and say, 'Do here in your native place the things that we heard were done in Capernaum.'" And he said, "Amen, I say to you, no prophet is accepted in his own native place. Indeed, I tell you, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah when the sky was closed for three and a half years and a severe famine spread over the entire land. It was to none of these that Elijah was sent, but only to a widow in Zarephath in the land of Sidon. Again, there were many lepers in Israel during the time of Elisha the prophet; yet not one of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian." When the people in the synagogue heard this, they were all filled with fury. They rose up, drove him out of the town, and led him to the brow of the hill on which their town had been built, to hurl him down headlong. But Jesus passed through the midst of them and went away.

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INVITATION TO PRAY

Pause for a few moments of silence and enter more deeply into the presence of God.

Proclaim the Scriptures out loud.

As you listen to the gospel be attentive to a word, a phrase, a question, an image, or a feeling that emerges. Reflect on this quietly or share it aloud.

INVITATION TO REFLECT

This week the other shoe drops. Last time, Jesus spoke in the synagogue and now we will hear the people's reaction to his message. A hint: they will try to throw him off a cliff. To see why, look at how bold Jesus was. First he searched out a prediction of the Messiah from the book of Isaiah. Here are the words he read:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord (Isaiah 61: 1-3).

Apparently, the people loved him for this, and for the words he spoke to them. But then he applied the reading to himself! He said, "Today this Scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing" (Gospel!)! "This scripture passage" was known to all as referring to the Messiah. They knew, therefore, that Jesus was claiming to be Messiah. The Nazareth synagogue was stunned. They already knew him well because he had grown up in their midst. He was the carpenter's son, the one they had seen weekly in this same synagogue. Why in the world would a local boy come up with such a silly story? He had traveled since growing up. Once, at the Jordan river, he had received baptism, and right after it the heavens opened up and the Holy Spirit descended upon him and a voice from the heavens said, "You are my beloved son, and in you I am well pleased" (Luke 3:21-22).

His life was different from then on. He could no longer remain simply an ordinary worker in Nazareth. Now that he had heard the Father's voice out loud, his ministry began. He was the anointed servant of God. Immediately he fled into the desert to brood and pray. "Who am I," he must have asked, "that I am called the Beloved of God? What does this mean?" He was attracted to the wrong answers, ones suggested by the devil. Turn his closeness to God into satisfaction, into power, into reputation. He was authentically tempted, but each time he refused. Back he came to Nazareth, now in the power of the Spirit, as Luke says. We can see why he selected that passage from Isaiah in the synagogue. As he told them, Isaiah's words were about him! He had heard it from God at his baptism. How were the Nazarenes supposed to have any understanding of this? They saw him as a mad man claiming equality with God! He was simultaneously insulting his home town, his people Israel, and his God. "He is out of his mind!" they murmured.

Jesus replied, "No prophet is accepted in his own native place." He states to their faces that neither Elijah and Elisha, great prophets, could work their miracles in Israel, but went elsewhere to do them. Is there any wonder the synagogue members went from admiration to shock and anger? They dragged him out to the cliff, planning to annihilate such a blasphemer. He escaped somehow, but look what his bold talk had done! This scene, and it is the first one in his public ministry, forecasts his whole life. First loved and accepted, then dragged to his death. In the coming months we will see the all his actions. Now he is filled with the Holy Spirit. What will he do? We must find out, because that same Spirit is offered to us daily.

INVITATION TO GROUP SHARING

1. What is the only thing you take with you when you die? Do you think you can expand your capacity for love by exercising the giving and receiving of love? Do you think that love is the prime mover in all that the Church does?
2. Both Jeremiah and Jesus provoked people in God's name but then escaped from the danger that resulted. What are the implications for us? What did God promise us?
3. Jesus said, "No prophet is accepted in his own native place." Do you think prophets care if they are accepted or not? Do you know anyone whom you would consider a prophet? What do you think changed them from "ordinary person" to "prophet"?

INVITATION TO ACT

Determine a specific action (individual or group) that flows from your sharing. When choosing an individual action, determine what you will do and share it with the group. When choosing a group action, determine who will take responsibility for different aspects of the action. These should be your primary considerations.

CLOSING INVITATION TO PRAY

Give thanks to God (aloud or silently) for new insights, for desires awakened, for directions clarified, for the gift of one another's openness and sensitivity. Conclude with the following:

Lord our God, help us to love you with all our hearts and to love all men as you love them. Grant this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen