

Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time (Year C)

Reading 1: [Jeremiah 1:4-5, 17-19](#)

Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm: 71:1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 15-17](#)

Reading II: [1 Corinthians 12:31-13:13 or 13:4-13](#)

Gospel: [Luke 4:21-30](#)

Readings may be found on the US Bishop's website:
<https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/013022.cfm>



Christ in the Synagogue ca 1350

The Gospel passage continues the narrative of Jesus preaching in the synagogue at Nazareth. Last week, Jesus read from the scroll of the prophet Isaiah, and we have today his declaration that the passage is now fulfilled in the ministry of Jesus. While people liked the message that Jesus offered, it did not fit culturally.

The crowd that gathered in the synagogue knew that Jesus was the son of Joseph, a local tradesman. One did not begin a new life's work and did not change one's social standing. Jesus should be a tradesman as well. The reader of the Gospel has a different insight. Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit. He is taking his proper place as the one sent by God. People need to listen and let God's Word find a place in their hearts to truly understand who Jesus is and who each of us is called to be.

Knowing their lack of understanding, Jesus quotes the proverb about prophets not being accepted in their home community and then cites the examples of Elijah and Elisha. They drew faith forth non-Israelites when the Israelites would not listen. The people in the synagogue become angry at the insult and threaten his life. This foreshadows how the leadership in Jerusalem will treat Jesus. Jesus, as the chosen one, continues with his ministry and passes through the crowd.

The first reading presents the beginning of Jeremiah's call and the assurance that God will be with him. Jeremiah worked immediately preceding the Babylonian Exile in 586 before Christ. His mission was to express the failure of the people to live for God. Society had become secular and, while paying attention to religion as an important practice, did not allow God to guide their lives and deeds. The king was more trusting of political alliances than relying upon God to guide and guard the kingdom.

God appoints Jeremiah as a prophet to the nations. This connects with the references to Elijah and Elisha and their ministry to Gentiles. The Jewish people long believed that God would care for only them. Luke, throughout his Gospel, points to God's love and care for all people. The ministry of a prophet is to announce God's message. It is a forth-telling rather than a foretelling. The prophet comes with a deep awareness and understanding of God's will and plan for salvation. In speaking the truth, Jeremiah will face suffering.

So, Jesus also will face suffering, and so will the disciples. The mystery of suffering has long puzzled people. If God is all-powerful, why is there suffering, particularly of the innocent? Jeremiah and Jesus lived through the suffering, knowing God was with them. The scriptures offer several insights into the reality of suffering. Some come from the evil intent of others or their lack of awareness. Some come from the limits and incompleteness of the natural world. So, experiences are beyond our comprehension, as was God's response to Job. The continuing message is that God will be with us and never abandon us.

In the second reading, Paul reflects love as the greatest of God's gifts. In St John's First Letter, he declares that God is love. Thus, to live love is to be like God. Paul uses a style of reflection based on the wisdom tradition.

This love should be the hallmark of the Christian life. Love is manifest in family life, in neighborhoods, in social structures, and between nations when one acts as a follower of Jesus. God acts toward each of us in this way. God is patient and bears all things. Yet human nature struggles to pass this along. The tone of society is selfish, and injustice is abundantly evident from the judgment of others to starving children. The great conversion of being a disciple is to love as God loves us even if others do not love in return.

More than faith or knowledge, love manifests God in our world.

Reflection Questions:

Have you ever made a quick decision about someone based on some assumption that later proved to be too limited?

How do you understand the role of a prophet?

How is suffering connected to following God's call?

What aspect of Love in St Paul's presentation stands out for you?

Themes

God's Call

Prophecy

Suffering

The virtue of love

Prayer Suggestions:

For one another: that we may hear God's call to us, courageously respond to it, and share God's message in our words and deeds

For all who are called to be prophets: that God will give them a clear insight into the truth, the strength to endure rejection and suffering, and convincing words to touch hearts about injustice and lack of love

For growth in loving service: that God will help us to lay down our lives in service of family, community, and our suffering sisters and brothers

For all who have experienced rejection and persecution for being Christian: that they may persevere in their faith and be witnesses to Christ in every situation