

4th Sunday of Ordinary Time, C cycle, St Mark's Lutheran, Middleburgh NY ~ Jan. 31, 2016

1st Reading: Isaiah 61:1-6 [The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, anointing me to preach good news to the poor]

Responsorial Psalm Psalm 71: 1-6

2nd Reading: 1 Corinthians 13:1-13 – [The greatest of God's gifts is love.]

Gospel: Luke 4:14-30 [Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.]

♪ Let us build a house where love can dwell and all can safely live
A place where saints and children tell how hearts learn to forgive
Built of hopes and dreams and visions, rock of faith and vault of grace;
Here the love of Christ shall end divisions:

ALL ARE WELCOME, ALL ARE WELCOME,.....ALL ARE WELCOME IN THIS PLACE! ♪

The song echoes the message of Jesus to the people in his home town. Jesus tells them that the Spirit of God has sent him as a *prophet* to proclaim good news to the poor, liberty to captives, recovery of sight to the blind, freedom for the oppressed and a year of favor from the Lord. That was last Sunday's Gospel.

And what is this *Good News* to the *poor*? The poor are the "anawim", those who sense their spiritual hunger & seek God - In both the reading from Isaiah & the Gospel, the poor are not primarily those who have nothing. The Gospel is about liberty to captives, sight to the blind, freedom for the oppressed & mercy to the whole human race.

If you go to most translations of verse 1 of Isaiah 61 you will find the phrase "release to the prisoners." But the original Hebrew is ambiguous. In the Greek version of Isaiah [the Septuagint] it is translated as "recovery of sight to the blind." That is the translation Jesus chooses as he reads from the scroll.

The Gospel passage given for today completes the one we heard last week
-they are 2 parts of the same story.

Jesus was in the tradition of the great prophets of Israel.

The 1st reading is from one of them, Isaiah, & the 2nd is by another prophet named Paul.

[Anna](#) I came across a **saying** & made a **sign** of it for Fr. Peter's refrigerator **but** Irene took it

A prophet reminds the establishment what it was established for.

It reminds us of just what a prophet does:like our friend, **Pat the Porcupine**, 
a prophet comforts the afflicted and afflicts the comfortable.

And that's what Paul is doing, when he challenges the people of Corinth to put love first; to

"build a house where love can dwell... where hearts learn to forgive... where the love of Christ shall end divisions."

That's what Jesus is doing in today's Gospel. He quotes from Isaiah at the beginning of the passage, inserting a verse from another part of the scroll,

then he recalls two stories from the Hebrew Scriptures.

He is reminding his friends & family in Nazareth, & all of us here of the message of Isaiah, Elijah & Elisha -that the love of God goes out to **all** people.

Peter Maybe that's why they resisted the message of mercy for Gentiles **and** Jews that Jesus brought. He refuses to be the messiah so many expected, the one who would bring "*a day of vengeance*" by destroying the gentiles.

Over the centuries there have been too many wars, crusades, jihads & persecutions which have been justified by interpreting the Bible (and other sacred scriptures) through the lens of a certain prejudice or ideology or desire for control. If we today are to understand the Bible, both Old & New Testament, we need to read scripture the way Jesus did.

If we are to understand our own Scriptures, we must put on the mind of Christ
and read them through the lens of his life & his words.

Anna

We share the gift of baptism with all of our Christian brothers & sisters. That's really clear in this congregation, where you who are Lutherans invite preachers like us who are Catholic to reflect with you on the Word of God. The bottom line is that all of us who are baptized are called to do what Christ did: to "*bring Good News to the poor, proclaim release to captives & recovery of sight to the blind. To let the oppressed go free & to announce a year of favor from the Lord.*"

After Jesus tells the people of his hometown that they are looking at the Messiah - saying,
"Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."

-they are a bit taken aback by the kind of Messiah he is describing.

Then he refers to two stories that the people of Nazareth are very familiar with. Both of them are
about God's mercy to people who were **not** Jews like them.

The first is the story of how the prophet **Elijah** was welcomed into the home of a poor widow from Sidon who was not a Jew. She was running out of food during a drought. Elijah arrived at her home and asked for something to eat.

She told him that there was only enough for herself and her son for a few days, but she put her faith in the God of Israel & took the risk to love as she gave him a part of what she had. The prophet promised that she would not run out of food until the rain returned, and the three of them were able to eat for three years. The prophet even raised her son from the dead by prayer.

The second story is about another Gentile, Naaman, a military general from Syria, again someone who was of a different culture and religion than the people of Nazareth. Another prophet, **Elisha**, healed this man of leprosy, even though he was a part of a nation which was, and still is a traditional enemy of Israel. Imagine an Israeli reaching out to a Palestinian and you'll get the picture

And how did the people react to those stories?

They got really angry –an anger rooted in fear & mistrust & a narrow vision of who God could love.

Peter What we hear most clearly from the Gospel and from all the readings today is that the love of God is poured out to **the nations**. When you hear that phrase in the writings of the Prophets & the Psalms, it means people who are not Jews, that is, people of the whole world. The love of God described by Paul and Jesus is offered to the **whole** human family.

The people of Nazareth were delighted to receive the healing, loving, forgiving word of God for *themselves*, but they did not want that same word to go too far beyond their borders, too far beyond **their** ideas about who could be saved by Yahweh. That's why they got angry with him, and, some say that's why they eventually crucified him. The same thing has happened to prophets before and since.

But Jesus says, you can't have it both ways. You do not *possess* the love and truth of God as your private good. If God's love can get through to you when you admit your need & your hunger, the same love is offered to the rich and the poor, the young and the old, the unborn and those on death row, the gay and the straight, those who have come through a divorce and those celebrating their 50th wedding anniversary, to Republicans *and* Democrats, to Jews and Palestinians, Christians and Muslims, believers & atheists.

God sent Isaiah, Elijah, Paul and Jesus as prophets to *all* peoples. The Spirit of Jesus reminds us, the Church of today, *why we were established*. We are called to be Church, that is, to be the Body of Christ, to love one another as Christ still loves us, to be an instrument, a delivery system of God's love, truth and healing to the whole human race.

[Anna](#) That is why religions & churches were established; that's the purpose of faith formation for adults, teens & children -to teach us to practice what Jesus preached, to sing in word & deed:

♪ Let us build a house where hands will reach beyond the wood and stone
To heal and strengthen, serve and teach, and live the Word they've known.
Here the outcast and the stranger bear the image of God's face;
Let us bring an end to fear and danger:

ALL ARE WELCOME, ALL ARE WELCOME,.....ALL ARE WELCOME IN THIS PLACE! ♪



Gospel Luke 4:14-30 [The Good News of healing and life is sent to all]

Anna Jesus came to Nazareth where he had been brought up, /
and entering the synagogue on the Sabbath, / as he was in the habit of doing, /
he stood up to do the reading. /

When the book of the Prophet Isaiah / was handed to him, /
he unrolled the scroll / & found the passage where it was written: /

Peter "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me;
for the Most High has anointed me:
Sending me to bring good news to the poor,
To proclaim release to the captives,
And recovery of sight to the blind
To send forth the oppressed in freedom,
And to proclaim a year of favor from the Lord."

Then he rolled up the scroll, / gave it back to the attendant / & sat down.

The eyes of everyone in the synagogue / were fastened on him, / & he began by saying to them,

"Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."

All who were present / were talking about him, /
and all / were surprised at the words of mercy / that came from his mouth. /

They also asked, / "Isn't this the son of Joseph?" /

Jesus said to them, /

"Surely you will quote me this proverb,
'Physician, heal yourself,' and say, 'Do here in your native place the things that we have
heard you have done in Capernaum'

"Amen, I say to you, no prophet is accepted in their own native place.

Indeed, let me remind you, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah,
(when the sky was closed for 3 & 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 cured, except 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, / & led him to the brow of the hill /

on which their town had been built, / intending to hurl him over the edge. /

But Jesus passed through their midst / & walked away.

The Gospel of the Lord.

[Luke 4:16-30]