

EPIPHANY 4
JEREMIAH 1:4-10
1 CORINTHIANS 13:1-13
LUKE 4:21-30
FEBRUARY 2, 3, 2019

YEAR C

The word of the Lord can sometimes be a difficult word. It can lead us to all kinds of thoughts and feelings. The call of God often leads us into a place we would rather not go giving us challenges we would rather not face. The Prophet Jeremiah was in a place he really did not want to be. Yet God's call is higher than our agenda. God's direction is to be followed even if and when we would rather not follow. God called Jeremiah to be a prophet to the people of Judah and Jerusalem. God told Jeremiah that God knew him before he was conceived and God would be with him giving him the right words to speak. God also assured Jeremiah that the people would not listen. If you read through the book of Jeremiah you will see that the people did not listen to his message from God. It got so bad that Jeremiah was no longer permitted in Jerusalem. Most of his message was sent to the king, the priests and others by Baruch the scribe and messenger of Jeremiah. Jeremiah was not received and he was in the dungeon for a time and in a cistern for a longer time. Even though the people did not receive him God sent him and God sustained him. Jeremiah was not pleased with the mission but he remained faithful. God also remained faithful to Jeremiah. Jeremiah did not go with the others into exile but ended up in Egypt. Jeremiah spoke words of warning to the people of Judah but he also spoke words of promise and hope. Jesus our Lord also came with a message and the people would not listen. He came with words of promise and hope but the people would not receive him.

Luke 4:21, 22 Then he began to say to them, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth. They said, "Is not this Joseph's son?"

As we read last week and today from Luke 4 we know that Jesus went home. It may have been some special occasion that took him home or it could be just a time for a visit. As was his custom, Jesus went to the synagogue on the Sabbath. It is important for us to see that Jesus knew of the importance of being in the holy place on the Sabbath. He also took his turn at leading the teaching for the day. He went to the synagogue and the book of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He read the section assigned for the day and he sat down to give the teaching. In that time the Rabbi stood to read from the scriptures and the people also stood out of reverence for the sacred word. The rabbi sat down to give its teaching.

You and I also stand when we hear this gospel lesson read. We do this out of respect for the Lord Jesus. We are hearing this sacred word and we do so in reverence. We hear the word of the Lord and we want to know what it means for us. We want to know its meaning but also how it impacts our lives. We want to know that the word of God still matters and it still has something to say to us in this time. We want to know that the preacher and teacher of God's word has something behind the gracious words coming from his or her mouth. We want to hear the truth even when that truth is not a pleasant truth. We want to know that God is with us and that God looks on us with kindness.

Luke 4:24-27 And he said, "Truly I tell you, no prophet is accepted in the prophet's hometown. But the truth is, there were many widows in Israel in the time of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, and there was a severe famine over all the land; yet Elijah was sent to none of them except to a widow at Zarephath in Sidon. There were also many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian."

Jesus found himself in a hostile place. Jesus was in his home town. He was there and the people heard him and his words were gracious and he seemed to speak with authority. In the beginning the hometown people praised him as being the son of Joseph. You and I know that Jesus is the ultimate authority but the people in Nazareth remembered that he grew up there. He may have

played with their kids. His father was Joseph the carpenter and Jesus was one of them. They did not believe it but Jesus was also the Son of God. Part of the issue is that they wanted Jesus to perform for them. "We heard what you did in other places. We want to see you perform here as well." The people of Nazareth thought they had an in with Jesus. They thought he would surely do a couple of miracles for them. The message Jesus gives is a message of good news. It is a message of good news for all people. When the hometown folks wanted him to minister to them first Jesus corrected them. He corrected them by saying that God cares for all people. God loves Gentiles as well as Jews. We read last week in Luke 4 that the spirit of the Lord is on Jesus who fulfills the ministry in the hearing of these people.

The word of God often cuts us to the core of our being. Sometimes the word of God offers correction in our lives. It may be something we don't want to hear but is something we need to hear. The word of God has a way of touching our lives in a way that says we need to change or fix something. It is often easier to lynch the preacher rather than face the word of the Lord. He read a couple of weeks ago that the Holy Spirit came upon Jesus. The messenger of the Lord listens to the Lord and is guided by the Holy Spirit. Even when the people want some other word the preacher and teacher listens to the Lord.

Luke 4:28-30 When they heard this, all in the synagogue were filled with rage. They got up, drove him out of the town, and led him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they might hurl him off the cliff. But he passed through the midst of them and went on his way.

Jesus is not bound by our thoughts or our ideas of what the Messiah does. God does what God desires to do. If God wants to reach out to a widow in Zaraphath that is what God will do. If God wants to give healing to a Syrian general God will give that healing. Our place is to walk in faith. We remember that Jesus came to save us from our sins and to give us life, health and salvation. The people were so enraged they were planning to throw him off a

hill and perhaps stone him. A month from now we will hear about the temptations of our Lord in the wilderness. One of the temptations is that Jesus should jump down from the pinnacle of the temple because the angels will not let him dash his foot against a stone. Could it be that this was another temptation? Why not allow yourself to be thrown down so the angels would catch you in the sight of the people? The people would surely be pleased to see this and believe. This might satisfy their need for a show of greatness from Jesus. Jesus will not remain where he is not wanted. If a church says we do not want the word of the Lord or the presence of God, God will not remain.

The people in Nazareth would not receive Jesus and his words. They would rather destroy him by throwing him off a hill than hear his life changing words. You and I have this word in front of us. We have this word and we have a choice to make. Do I listen to the Lord and allow God's word to change me? Our Lord is speaking to you today. He comes with a life changing word that says he comes for all people. Jesus did not come just for the people of Our Savior's Lutheran Church but for all people everywhere. Jesus is not bound by our ideas or our traditions but moves beyond any of that. Trust that the Lord is leading and working among us. Hear his word and follow his ways. AMEN