

Commentary on the Gospel for Sun, Jan 31st 2016

“The word of the Lord came to me...”

In the first reading Jeremiah writes: “The Word of the Lord came to me saying: Before I formed you...I knew you...” “...as though I would leave you...” “...I am with you... to deliver you...” There seems to be a slight tone of urgency as if the Lord was desperately trying to convince (Who me?) of God’s love, constancy.

In the psalm we hear the writer’s response: “In you, O Lord, I take refuge...” “In your justice rescue me...save me...” “You are my hope, O Lord...” “On you I depend...” “...I proclaim your wondrous deeds.” I might add, “I rely on your mercy, O Lord.” In this reading we hear an undertone of desperation. A plea not to be abandoned. Possible it all sounds too good to be true. Doubt arises.

In the second reading from 1 Corinthians we hear one of the loveliest and most repeated readings of the bible. Paul proclaims in clear and simple language the essence of Love. Paul tells us what Love is and what it is not. “Love is patient...kind...bears... hopes... endures...and rejoices with the truth.” “Love never fails.” “Love is not jealous...pompous...inflated...rude...quick-tempered” Paul ends by saying, “...the greatest of these three (faith, hope, love) is love.” “...but (if I, Paul) do not have love, I gain (am) nothing.”

In a word, Love is what is being spoken about in Jeremiah and in the psalm.

We, the Lord and I, are entwined in a love relationship beyond my understanding. I can’t conceive of such a relationship. I am sustained in the Lord’s loving desire for me and in my humanity I struggle and yearn to live into the fullness of the Lord’s love for me.

Today’s reading from the gospel of Luke follows Jesus’ return from 40 days in the desert and 3 significant temptations to renounce his relationship with Yehwah, his Father. Jesus in his humanity suffered the pain of these temptations, but was faithful to his Father. On his return he was “...filled with the powers of the Spirit...” and began to “teach in the synagogues and was praised by everyone.”

Except not everyone. Not his own people. Not the people of Nazareth. Not after he proclaimed he was the fulfillment of the words of Isaiah: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me...anointed me to bring good news...sent me to proclaim...(to) recover (cure)...(to) free..., to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

Jesus’ friends and family doubted that he could possibly be the fulfillment of scripture. Doubted that he could be the incarnation of the relationship that the Lord had spoken about in Jeremiah. How could Jesus, the boy they all knew, the man Jesus “...Joseph’s (the carpenter) son...” be the fulfillment of Isaiah? They may have thought: We know him. This is very doubtful. This is blasphemy. Luke goes on to speak of Hebrew scriptural events equally unbelievable, doubtful and unexplainable.

“...they were filled with fury. They rose up, drove him (Jesus) out of town...to hurl him down headlong. But Jesus passed through the midst...and went away.”

This is not the end of the story. We know that Jesus did not stay “away”. We know that Jesus

returned again and again to those in doubt, those in pain, those hurting, to the seekers and the self-proclaimed unbelievers. As the Lord committed – the Lord knows me, whatever I may think about myself, the Lord will not leave me. I have been promised the refuge, peace, constancy and mercy of the Lord.

Today's Good News: Jesus does not return. Jesus Is. The Lord never abandons. Never. The Lord is constant. Seeker, doubter or unbeliever, I am loved beyond all understanding. This I know – I am worthy of the Lord's love and mercy not in spite of who I am, but because of who I am. How do I know?

“the bible tells me so...”

Amen

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