

## eLectionary Readings Discussion for Sunday, January 31, 2010

A Ministry of Christ the Redeemer Church, San Marcos, Texas

*I press on...*

**Year C**

**RCL**

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The Lectionary Readings for the week:

Jeremiah 1:4-10

Psalms 71:1-6

1 Corinthians 13:1-13

Luke 4:21-30

Running for office is very tiring. I drove many miles today after a long day in the office to talk to a single voter. I now have driven over 3,000 miles INSIDE Hays County talking to voters. Elections in Texas are still won with handshakes and shoe leather. Lacking any local media, I am forced to go to the voters and give them my message. The Biblical record shows that the "messenger" always has to personally present the message to change minds and motivate people. As Jesus shows us in the Luke passage, deliverance does not guarantee acceptance. Can you imagine Jesus on a television show? Can you imagine Jesus' picture on a milk carton? A message worth telling is worth the trouble to deliver it one at a time or one group at a time. Now you know my campaign strategy: talk with the people and they will tell you the issues and possible solutions. As I write this, it is very late after a long day on the campaign trail. Forgive my brevity and my terseness. I am up against a lot of deadlines but YOU are very important to me and I want to get this "in the can". I hope you find something useful in my words. God will impart His message despite my poor attempt. God bless us as we live each day with FAITH, HOPE and LOVE.

### **Jeremiah 1:4-10**

***The word of the LORD came to me saying,  
"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you,  
and before you were born I consecrated you;  
I appointed you a prophet to the nations."***

***Then I said, "Ah, Lord GOD! Truly I do not know how to speak, for I am only a boy." But the LORD said to me,***

***"Do not say, 'I am only a boy';  
for you shall go to all to whom I send you,***

**and you shall speak whatever I command you,**  
**Do not be afraid of them,**  
**for I am with you to deliver you,**  
**says the LORD."**

***Then the LORD put out his hand and touched my mouth; and the LORD said to me,***

***"Now I have put my words in your mouth.***

***See, today I appoint you over nations and over kingdoms,  
to pluck up and to pull down,  
to destroy and to overthrow,  
to build and to plant."***

This passage is about the "anointing" of Jeremiah by the Lord when Jeremiah was "just a boy". This passage gives me great comfort as I campaign because, if the message is true and important, God will bless and energize me. Struggling to remain truthful and honorable in politics is not easy. People do not trust politicians. People often do not believe the truth because they have heard lies so often from the lips of politicians. What encouragement do you see in this passage? Perhaps there is someone in your life that needs to hear a message of truth, a message of hope or a message of love and caring? God says, "Be bold and trust in ME." God KNEW Jeremiah "before I formed you in the womb". If Jeremiah was the "same" as you and me, then, assuredly, God KNOWS you and me BEFORE we were born. Does that give you peace? Does that comfort you? Does that change your attitude about life? Does it empower you? God KNOWS us and has always KNOWN us. It is fruitless for us to pretend with God. We only fool ourselves when we try to fool God. God has always been in our lives whether we acknowledge it or not. Get over it. It only strengthens our ties with the Father and that should give us the power to press on...

**Psalm 71:1-6 Page 683, BCP**

***In te, Domine, speravi = "In you, O Lord, have I taken refuge;"***

**1**

***In you, O LORD, have I taken refuge; \****  
***let me never be ashamed.***

**2**

***In your righteousness, deliver me and set me free; \****  
***incline your ear to me and save me.***

**3**

***Be my strong rock, a castle to keep me safe; \****  
***you are my crag and my stronghold.***

**4**

***Deliver me, my God, from the hand of the wicked, \****  
***from the clutches of the evildoer and the oppressor.***

**5**

**2**

**For you are my hope, O Lord GOD, \***  
**my confidence since I was young.**

6

**I have been sustained by you ever since I was born;**  
**from my mother's womb you have been my strength; \***  
**my praise shall be always of you.**

Shame is a foreign concept in our world. Why do you think this is? Is it because we have no concept of whose we are? Is it because we are not under the sovereignty of God? Shame is something we “feel” as a result of disappointing someone’s expectations of us. If we feel no responsibility to God or some “authority”, shame is impossible. If we feel no loyalty to our spouses, how can we be ashamed for our infidelity? If we have no loyalty to Christ, how can we feel shame for our unfaithfulness to God’s Son? Do we really rely upon God for our strength in daily struggles? Do we rely on God or do we rely upon ourselves or another human? The psalmist KNEW upon whom he could rely, the LORD. Because of this faith, he had hope and knew the love of God was eternally his. With this understanding, I press on...

### **1 Corinthians 13:1-13**

***If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.***

**Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends. But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end. For we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part; but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end. When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways. For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known. And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.**

Most of us recognize this passage from the “Love Chapter”, I Corinthians 13. It follows on the heels of all the passages about “spiritual gifts” that we have labored with over the past few weeks. This is Paul’s attempt to put things into proper perspective. LOVE is the essential element that binds us together as the “Body of Christ”. Notice, please, that LOVE is the antithesis of self-centeredness and extends for eternity. If we possess all things, all spiritual gifts and all worldly

praise yet we lack LOVE, we are useless as “God’s people”. “His banner over us is LOVE”. How do we get this “LOVE” thing? Paul gives us a hint: it comes from seeing ourselves clearly and by understanding and “owning” the LOVE of God. We are merely conduits of the LOVE we have received from God. The “Holy Trinity” becomes FAITH, HOPE and LOVE in a very real sense. Perhaps, this is the “trinity” we should understand and practice? Having received this message of FAITH, HOPE and LOVE, I press on...

### **Luke 4:21-30**

***In the synagogue at Nazareth, Jesus read from the book of the prophet Isaiah, and began to say, "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?" He said to them, "Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb, 'Doctor, cure yourself!' And you will say, 'Do here also in your hometown the things that we have heard you did at Capernaum.'" 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." 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.***

Public opinion is a harsh slave master. When we tell people the truth, we will not be accepted and appreciated by everyone. Why did Luke put this episode in his gospel? What is he trying to teach us? Is it encouragement for when we tell people the truth of sin and they turn on us? Is it an “outward” battle or is it an “internal struggle”? Have you ever been “torn within yourself”? Often, it is easier to “identify” the “enemy” when they are external to our selves than when they are “US”. The adult Christian is at constant odds with an “ideal” that we have accepted versus the reality of who we are. “Sin” is the translation of a Greek word meaning “missing the mark” which implies that an attempt to “hit the bull’s eye” falls “short” of the target. If we have no “target”, no standard of behavior, no touchstone, can we “sin”? The only ones who don’t make “mistakes” are those inert folks who do nothing. I know it is an existential question but one with which I struggle on a daily basis. It is the eternal cop out of “but, everyone else is doing it” or “they started it”. I don’t need to “go to church” to hear others tell me that I am a sinner. I KNOW that I’m a sinner who will be saved from perdition ONLY by the GRACE of God. Should I give up and stop trying or should I “just take my best shot” even knowing that I will probably “miss the mark”? Did Jesus let the rejection of the people deter him from completing his call to ministry? Jesus demonstrated that the people were selfish and wished the blessings of healing

that Jesus had performed in other cities and towns BUT he withheld the healing and quoted scripture to excuse his reticence? Are we no less demanding and self-centered than these people? Do we pray for deliverance or healing and DEMAND the immediate response? Every one of us has, at some time in our lives, demanded the immediate answer to our prayers of deliverance, have we not? Many of us carry or wear a cross or crucifix. I carry a cross of mesquite handmade by a dear friend. Why do we carry these symbols? Do we think of them as some “magical talisman” that we can rub like some Aladdin’s Lamp and God will appear to grant our wishes? OR, do they remind us that God is always near and cares? Is my prayer more “important” than yours? Is it more “important” than the Pope’s or Mother Theresa’s? Mother Theresa often spoke of her frustration and impatience with God when she expected more prompt answers to her requests. IF God is not a “respector of persons” and IF God is Father of us all and, IF God is omniscient and omnipresent, God must be VERY busy listening to all those requests. Does God have “call waiting”? Have you ever felt like God “put you on HOLD”? Again we get into the concept of “our time” versus “God’s time” and we “chase our tails” until we are spiritually dizzy. These people were angry because Jesus did not give them the “answer” they wanted or do as they wanted. Do we get angry with God when we feel ignored or that we have been “put on hold”? Where is the “peace” in this passage? ***“But he passed through the midst of them and went on his way.”*** Jesus was “task oriented” and knew his goals and the purpose for his ministry so he “moved on”. Perhaps the grace we need is to “keep on keeping on”. I once asked an older Christian what his secret to successful living was. His answer: “Just do the next thing.” To me, that was what Jesus modeled for us. When others appear to reject us and turn on us, we just need to have the conviction to “just do the next thing” and keep Heaven in our cross hairs. As Paul said, “Forgetting what is past, I PRESS ON...” The attitude of GRACE is having the HOPE and FAITH to “do the next thing” and TRUST that God will use us for His purpose and reward our faith with more faith. I press on...and so should each of us.