

FOURTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

LECTIONARY #72

READING I Jeremiah 1:4–5, 17–19

A reading from the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah

The word of the LORD came to me, saying:

**Before I formed you in the womb I knew you,
before you were born I dedicated you,
a prophet to the nations I appointed you.**

**But do you gird your loins;
stand up and tell them
all that I command you.**

**Be not crushed on their account,
as though I would leave you crushed before them;
for it is I this day**

**who have made you a fortified city,
a pillar of iron, a wall of brass,
against the whole land:**

**against Judah's kings and princes,
against its priests and people.**

**They will fight against you but not prevail over you,
for I am with you to deliver you, says the LORD.**

Jeremiah = jayr-uh-Mĭ-uh

Only the first line is the prophet's. The balance is spoken by the Lord.

Always begin slowly; here it's especially important so these key declarations are clearly heard.

The text jumps ahead to God's "pep talk." Don't rush, and speak like a teacher, coach, or parent encouraging an insecure youth who faces a great challenge.

"This is what I've done for you," God says. "I've made you like a city with thick walls and strong defenses."

Listed here are all those who will oppose Jeremiah.

Speak this promise with the love of a parent or spouse sending a loved one off to battle.

READING I The account of Jeremiah's vocation tells of the prophet's twofold conviction. He is conscious of being an ambassador to foreign nations, even while his own people reject him. The prophet's first task is to trust in God's Word, taught to him from his youth. Throughout his life, he will contend with civil authorities who endanger the people's freedom and with religious authorities who place their trust in the temple and external cult, while Jeremiah preaches a religion of the heart. But he remains faithful to his vocation in the face of adversity. He will doubt, but the

believer in him stands up and speaks; when the "prophet to the nations" complains, God reassures him: "Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you," who made him "a fortified city . . . against the whole land."

READING II Paul's hymn to love adds another layer to this Sunday's themes. No other gift, not even faith or hope, outshines love that will never pass away, because it shares in and expresses God's very life. Love, the foundation of all, never fails; it is patient and enduring. Love allows Jeremiah and Jesus

to endure suffering and persecution. Knowledge of God's love, even though seen as "in a mirror," inspires trust in God's rescue and praise of God's justice. Love is what really counts in the end.

Writing about love, Paul does not use the word *eros*, understood as possessive desire that seeks its own good; he spells out another word, *agápē*, understood as charity or compassion, that is, love that spreads outwards and does not grab or keep for itself. It is the most excellent gift, not possessive, envious, angry, or begrudging. *Agápē* is comprehensive love that pardons,

For meditation and context:

TO KEEP IN MIND

Don't neglect the Responsorial Psalm just because you aren't proclaiming it. Pray it as part of your preparation.

Corinthians = kohr-IN-thee-uhn-z

From the start, let your tone suggest that this message will be extraordinary.

Pause after "excellent way" to breathe and renew your energy. Then launch into his exhortation.

Because he's speaking in the first person, he can use dismissive language about how these things amount to nothing.

In each successive example the level of excellence grows, and yet it all still amounts to nothing.

This section speaks truth to all our self-delusions, so deliver the lines with authority and conviction.

tolerates, and hopes without limits, while erotic love seeks to preserve itself, and thus becomes a jealous desire, which seeks to seize the good for the self rather than for the common good.

GOSPEL

In the Gospel we hear how Jesus' compatriots do not tolerate that he, citing Scripture, places himself among the prophetic line of Elijah and Elisha, who spared outsiders from starvation and healed a foreigner's leprosy. This provokes a violent reaction that evokes his expulsion from the city, his death on Calvary, and his Resurrection: "Jesus

RESPONSORIAL PSALM Psalm 71:1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 15, 17 (see 15ab)

R. I will sing of your salvation.

In you, O LORD, I take refuge;
let me never be put to shame.
In your justice rescue me, and deliver me;
incline your ear to me, and save me.

Be my rock of refuge,
a stronghold to give me safety,
for you are my rock and my fortress.
O my God, rescue me from the hand of the
wicked.

For you are my hope, O Lord;
my trust, O God, from my youth.
On you I depend from birth;
from my mother's womb you are my
strength.

My mouth shall declare your justice,
day by day your salvation.
O God, you have taught me from my youth,
and till the present I proclaim your
wondrous deeds.

READING II 1 Corinthians 12:31—13:13

A reading from the first Letter of Saint Paul to the Corinthians

[Brothers and sisters:]

Strive **eagerly** for the **greatest** spiritual gifts.
But I shall **show** you a **still more excellent** way.

If I speak in **human** and **angelic** tongues,
but do **not** have **love**,

I am a resounding **gong** or a clashing **cymbal**.

And if I have the **gift of prophecy**,
and **comprehend all mysteries** and **all knowledge**;
if I have **all faith** so as to move **mountains**,
but do **not** have **love**, I am **nothing**.

If I give away **everything I own**,
and if I **hand my body over** so that I may **boast**,
but do **not** have **love**, I **gain nothing**.

[Love is **patient**, love is **kind**.

It is not **jealous**, it is not **pompous**,
it is not **inflated**, it is not **rude**,
it does **not** seek its own **interests**,
it is not **quick-tempered**, it does not **brood** over **injury**,
it does not **rejoice** over **wrongdoing**
but **rejoices** with the **truth**.

passed through the midst of them" and went away. Throughout his ministry, Jesus will face Israel's disbelief; he will not heed to social pressure, and thus he will extend the Gospel beyond the people's customary boundaries. The prophets Elijah and Elisha had already experienced such a rejection, and the outcome was of benefit to the Gentiles, who would welcome the Good News. Luke's account of the Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles are the story of how far afield the Good News reaches.

There is a parallel between the first reading and the Gospel. Jeremiah and Jesus speak against the tide, as they emphasize

the extent of God's goodness; yet they experience rejection by much of their audience because they do not flatter them, because they do not say what people like to hear. Both will cross the borders of the chosen people and open the message of salvation to all nations. Both dealt with opposition from the authorities. Jeremiah's confidence resonates in Jesus' trust in his Father: "Not my will but yours be done." Jesus knows that God will restore life to the dead. His adversaries tried to silence him by throwing him over the cliff, but Jesus, the risen, escaped their death trap.

Don't shy from these repetitions, but emphasize only the new verb in each phrase.

After slowly asserting that "Love never fails," move quickly through the listing of what will cease.

Prophesy = PROF-uh-sī

Make the case here with energy and brisk pacing.

This is a continuation of the point just made.

Pause before this climactic final line. Establish eye contact and then speak these compelling words with great sincerity.

Since there is no introduction to the scene, let your solemn tone suggest the impression Jesus has made on them. Contrast the praise in this line with the skepticism implicit in the question that follows.

The people of Jesus' hometown applauded him for what he had done in Capernaum, and now they received the "son of Joseph" because they desired to profit from his extraordinary gifts. When Jesus announced "Today this Scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing," his neighbors considered only their own well-being and expected some miracle, but he referred to a more astonishing fulfillment of the prophetic text.

In the synagogue, Jesus explained that the ministry of the prophets Elijah and Elisha, in addition to responding to their fellow citizens, extended also to foreigners;

**It bears all things, believes all things,
hopes all things, endures all things.**

Love never fails.

If there are **prophecies**, they will be brought to **nothing**;
if **tongues**, they will **cease**;
if **knowledge**, it will be **brought to nothing**.

For we **know partially** and we **prophesy partially**,
but when the **perfect** comes, the **partial** will pass away.

When I was a **child**, I used to **talk as a child**,
think as a child, **reason as a child**;
when I became a **man**, I put **aside childish** things.

At **present** we see **indistinctly**, as in a **mirror**,
but **then face to face**.

At **present** I know **partially**;
then I shall know **fully**, as I am **fully known**.

So **faith**, **hope**, **love** remain, these **three**;
but the **greatest** of these is **love**.]

[Shorter: 1 Corinthians 13:4–13 (see brackets)]

GOSPEL Luke 4:21–30

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke

Jesus began speaking in the synagogue, saying:

"Today this Scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing."

And all spoke highly of him

**and were amazed at the gracious words that came
from his mouth.**

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

by the same token, Jesus' attentions were not limited to his own race. He was sent to free the prisoners, attend the poor and helpless, and announce joyful news that culminates in the gift of his life, surrendered for the love of all humanity. Jesus does not seek his own interest, but offers every person the freedom and life that has its source in God's love.

God, in Jesus, embodies love (*agápē*) and calls us to do the same. Since the creation of the world there was water that refreshed the whole garden, but the original family rejected the gift by their disobedience. During the exodus, God offered the

bread in the desert, manna, but the people were not satisfied and longed for the food of their enslaved life. We were hungry and thirsty, but we rejected the provisions that would restore us. We became weak, wounded by the thorn of selfishness, yet we shunned the life offered to us. When the gracious Word of God, always attentive to his creature, saw that we were not going to reach him, he came to us, assumed the form of daily bread, and became weak to rescue us from weakness, to transform our selfish instincts into love that nourishes the life of others. The Bread of Life gave us the recipe for a full and happy existence.