

Sunday, February 3, 2019

Jeremiah 1:4-10

I Corinthians 13:1-13

Luke 4:21-30

Caring for Others

We continue in this season of Epiphany to focus upon the person of Jesus as we learn more about his purpose and who he was, is and can be to all people. We remember the story of the Wise Men's visit and gifts given to Jesus. We also recall Jesus' baptism and how Jesus was recognized as God's Son. We also remember that Jesus did not want others to know who he was at the wedding banquet until he was ready to act and make more wine. As we continue to focus on Jesus' reading of the scripture from Isaiah, and stating that the Spirit has fulfilled it in him and hearing about the fallout from this, we need to remember that not everyone flocked to hear Jesus speak nor did they believe who he said he was- the Son of God.

When Jesus went into the synagogue he wanted to read the text to those listening. He knew what he wanted to say and a part of this was testing the crowd- his own synagogue family- about who he was and what his life's purpose was. They knew Jesus- through most of his childhood and youth and so it wasn't unusual for Jesus to read the scriptures- he had done so at his bar mitzvah, he had come with his parents Joseph and Mary and siblings on a regular basis. But something occurred that day. Many heard Jesus read and yet did not fully understand the implications of his comment—today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.

Instead of saying wow- Jesus is the promised one, or I knew he was different! Or even but he was just like us, they questioned his ability. And even caused loud discussions to run wild in the synagogue. So much so that Jesus needed to get out of there for his own safety. What might have been possible as a loving embrace to Jesus the young person they knew to become the Saviour became a time of dissent or even hate. What could have been a time for embracing Jesus as God's Son turned to a time of question God, faith and most of all themselves. Maybe they were jealous, envious or even swept away in fear. What would this mean to them who knew Jesus the most—fame, glory, riches? Or cast away forever? The crowd responded in anger and just walked on through and into the world to which he now belonged.

Have you ever been in a situation where what you said turned the people's minds/ voices/ hearts and actions to act against you? We might wonder if Jesus expected this to occur but it is how he

handles the situation which is amazing- He walks through the crowd and leaves. He knows for sure that his home synagogue needed to hear from him first and this was an indicator of how others might and eventually would act to hearing from the Messiah in their midst.

We might say well if Jesus came and told us what he had shared with his synagogue about God's Spirit upon we would never have done what they did. But the reality is each one of us has done something like this. Just take a moment—to a time when you heard the story of Jesus not the first time, but the second, third and fourth time—how Jesus shared his last supper, was arrested, tried and put on a cross to die. Did you respond right away that Jesus did this for you? Or did you have to hear it again—and have the Spirit of God speak to your heart? Did you have to have the love of the community around you for you to hear, really hear these words?

Or maybe your like Linus who states, “Lucy says that half of our heart is filled with hate and half is filled with love... And she says this hate and love are always fighting within us... always quarrelling, battling, struggling . {Linus is filled with anxiety and stress and is upset.) In response he yells out of this struggle from within, PEACE! So loud that it moves Charlie Brown to roll away from him.] Do we have this struggle within us? Love- Hate—they seem to be opposites but are they really? How do we confront this battle which is unseen?

Let us reflect now on a different community of believers, the early Christian church in Corinth. Paul helped to establish this church and after it was going for a while Paul writes a letter to them. He addresses various problems he has heard about and answers questions they have asked of him. His response to the Corinthian church about the concerns raised is that people are to be obedient to Christ and to strive for unity, humility and love in the church. He has taught them that everyone receives gifts from the Spirit, and that the church is the body of Christ with Jesus as its head. Yet he goes to describe what is often referred to as the love chapter. I Cor. 13 is often read at weddings as well as in memorial services indicating the priority of a loving relationship between married couples and of the relationship people had with the deceased individual. But Paul emphasizes the need to love as the greatest most excellent way of caring for others.

Paul states—you can speak in many languages but if you do not love—you are like loud noises. If you can prophecy and can understand all that there is and have strong faith even enough to move mountains, but do not love, you are nothing. And even if you give everything away you gain nothing

without love. He then describes the attributes of love—what a person who loves does and does not do. And this is essential—for all to understand—we need to love each other.

Jesus knew this after he read in the synagogue—the love and support he had was not there and so he moved on. In our church family we pray that you feel the love of God, and the love and care from those who claim Glenwood as their church family. We may not all hug each other freely—some of us are a little more reserved; we may not know everything there is about your life- but we want to share in it; and we may only know you a little bit right now- but in the meantime, we will love you with the love of the Lord because this is the greatest there is—love.

But this takes time, trust, and prayerfully the right balance will emerge.

Lucy and Linus are talking and he says, “Lucy, I don’t want my heart to be half love and half hate. I want to be All Love!” Lucy replies, “Good for you, Linus. All you have to do is lean a little to one side.. See? Now the love will get a chance to spill over into the hate! Charlie Brown’s response: Good Grief.

We are called to love each other as Jesus teaches us to care for others and to meet the needs of those who are searching. Whether these needs are necessary for life- food, shelter, clothing or whether they fall into what we might consider the ability to live life to its fullest. But before we can do anything we must love others just as we love ourselves. The greatest gift we have received as human beings is to love others on various levels of care. To love means also to put yourself out there and risk a relationship in the hope of being cared for as well. By faith however we can do this because we are not alone as we reach out to others, the Spirit is with us guiding us and leading us to where we need to be and in what we are called to do. So as we consider reaching out to others in love, we must also realize that when we do so it is not just a part of us—but we are to be fully present as we care and show love. And we need to focus on this in order that our lives maybe focused on Christ Jesus and his love for us all.