



SUNDAY, JANUARY 30, 2022

(LEC. 72)

FOURTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

1. JEREMIAH 1:4-5, 17-19
2. 1 CORINTHIANS 12:31–13:13 OR 13:4-13
3. LUKE 4:21-30

GOSPEL RELATED:

CCC 436, 544, 695, 714, 1168,
1286, 2443

FOCUS: LOVE NEVER FAILS.

Anyone who has been to a Catholic wedding has likely heard today's second reading there. It is chosen, and appropriate, not just for its relevance to the couple about to embark on a sacramental life together, but for what it reveals about God – that God is love. Love is not just a sentiment, but an action. Therefore, when patience and kindness are extended; when one bears, hopes, believes, and endures all things; and when one is not pompous, or jealous, or rude ... that is love. Anything else is not love. Saint Paul is not just "defining the love" that comes from God, he is confirming that all things good derive from love, and that authentic love produces goodness. This enduring reality of love is revealed in who God is for us, for no matter what we have done to and against him throughout our human history, he has never failed to love us.

One of the messages that can be gleaned from our Gospel today is similar to Paul's. The setting of today's passage is Jesus helping people in the synagogue understand how some of the old prophecies refer to him. Yet they find it difficult to believe that this poor, obscure, son of a carpenter could possibly be the one who is fulfilling this prophecy from Isaiah. Their familiarity with Jesus makes it particularly challenging for them to see him as more than simply a charismatic teacher. They want Jesus to work some miracles to prove he is who he claims to be.

Rather than working miracles, Jesus scandalizes them by suggesting that his saving ministry is not only for the Jewish

people. Once Jesus insists that the love of God is large enough to save even the Gentiles, this draws anger and rejection from his hometown community. The fact that he would suggest that God would have love and mercy for unclean outsiders is too much for the people to accept. Their admiration of Jesus turns to indignation very quickly. How could this possibly be the Anointed One if he suggests such shocking things?

Jesus is revealing a fuller and better understanding of God's love. God is so loving and merciful that even those who began as his enemies could be brought into his friendship. Jesus' mission was to make the way to heaven so that anyone who repents and believes in him could find the path home. Jesus would save Samaritans, Romans, and many other people that the Jewish crowd would view as enemies. This notion of God's love was so generous that the people were scandalized by its depth and scope.

It is not hard to be challenged by the scope and depth of God's love, and what that demands from us in return. It is difficult for us to truly grasp how the love of God can be so vast. We may even, at times, doubt that the Lord can truly love and forgive us, since we know the depths of our own sinfulness. Jesus rejects any limits on God's love, and Paul gives us words of great hope: Love never fails. We can know this only partially, for we see indistinctly, as Paul says. But through Christ we get a glimpse of what we, one day, will know fully. For faith, hope, and love remain – and the greatest is love.



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