

Sunday's Word

Love is patient, love is kind

January 31, 2016

FOURTH SUNDAY IN
ORDINARY TIME**Jer 1:4-5, 17-19**

Jeremiah's call to prophecy

Ps 71:1-6, 15-17

In you I take refuge

1 Cor 12:31-13:13

The greatest gift is love

Lk 4:21-30

Negative reaction in Nazareth

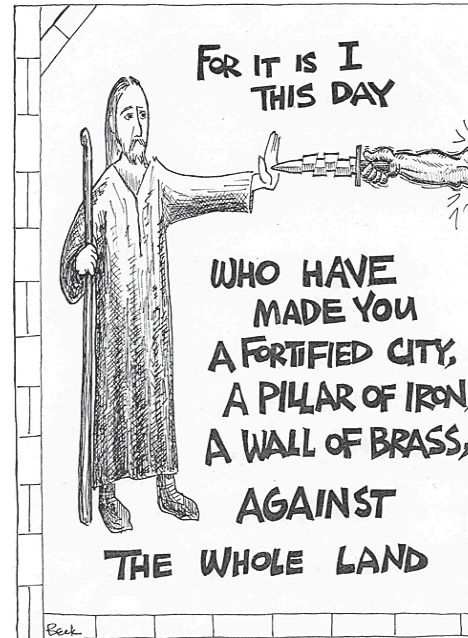
[http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/
013116.cfm](http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/013116.cfm)**REV. ROBERT
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agogue of Nazareth. This passage, the first part of which we heard last week, stands as a programmatic statement for Luke's Gospel, as well as his second volume, the book of Acts of the Apostles.

Last week we saw the admiration Jesus evoked after reading from Isaiah 61, announcing a year favorable to the Lord. This week we see the tide turn against him, as the people of Nazareth reject his teaching. In Luke-Acts (the name we give to the double work of Luke's) there is a close connection between rejection and mission. The rejection of Jesus recounted in the Gospel account is followed by the mission to the Gentiles as described in Acts. The rejection of Stephen, in Acts 7, followed by a persecution, then stimulates the mission beyond Jerusalem in Acts 8. And here, in Luke 4, the mention of the mission to Gentiles results in an attempt to harm Jesus by throwing him from the brow of the hill at Nazareth.

What prompts this extreme reaction? It would seem to be Jesus' mention of his intent to bring the message to Gentiles, people beyond the world of Judaism, that



stimulates their reaction. Not only does Jesus note that they will want him to do in Nazareth what he does elsewhere, implying that Nazareth will not be the site of his activity, but also he draws it out in some detail, invoking the examples of Elijah and Elisha. The prophet Elijah was known for leaving Israel during the great famine and going to a town in what is now Lebanon. The story of his raising the son of the widow there has its echoes in Luke 7:11-17, Acts 9:36-43, and 20:7-12.

Elisha, Elijah's successor, had a similar adventure (2 Kings 4:8-37), but he probably is more famous for ridding Naaman, the Syrian military commander, of his leprosy (2 Kings 5), which is the other example cited in the Gospel. In the later narrative, Luke also features military figures, especially centurions (Luke 7:1-10, Acts 10:24-49, 27:1-5).

We recall that Luke's project is to show the Jesus movement—not yet “Christianity” as we know it—expanding beyond its origins in Galilee and Judea. This is one of the main purposes behind Luke-Acts. The figures of Elijah and Elisha personify that expanding horizon.

An undertone today is the recurring pattern of the rejected prophet, as in the first reading. Actually, this passage is preceded by Jeremiah's call, followed by his attempt to refuse that call as he anticipates the negative response he will receive. The reading today is the assurance that the Lord will support him: “I this day have made you a fortified city, a pillar of iron, a wall of brass.”

Ironically, Jeremiah later will complain that this very assurance misled him, and he was not protected as he had been promised (Jer 20:7-18). And yet he still would do the same.

For reflection: If Paul is not talking about marriage in I Corinthians 13, what is he talking about?

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