

JANUARY 30, 2022
Sunday of the 4th Week in OT
Luke 4: 21-30

“I APPOINTED YOU A PROPHET.”

“A boy bought a pair of bright coloured pants for his girlfriend on her birthday. Even though it was a bit expensive he was very delighted with his purchase. But the next day he went back to the shop to return it. The shopkeeper asked him, "Why are you returning it?" The boy replied, "I am sorry Sir. My girlfriend does not like it." After much persuasion he got his refund and returned home. A week later he was back again, all smiles, and wanted to buy the same pair of pants. The shopkeeper asked him, "Has your girlfriend changed her mind?" "No Sir. I have changed my girlfriend", the boy replied.”¹

We see this attitude in our gospel for today: the people of Jesus’ own town, Nazareth first spoke well of Him but rejected him quickly and tried to kill him. Why change of mind and attitude? We heard in the gospel Jesus cited two events about Prophets Elijah and Elisha. During the three and half years of drought, the Lord sent Elijah to Zarephath and stayed to a widow and her son. They were non-Israelites, not member of God’s chosen people but the Lord sustained, aided, and helped them. The second event was to Naaman, the commander of the army of the King of Syria who was healed from leprosy by Elisha. After he was healed, he turned away from his pagan god and worshipped the Lord. Again, Naaman was non-Israelites, not a member of God’s chosen people but the Lord healed him.

“The point of both stories is that God had worked before through prophets to help those outside of Israel, outside of the exclusive circle of the ‘chosen people.’ In so doing, Jesus also reminded them that His mission is to deliver people of all nations from their desperate situations. But as soon as Jesus identified Himself in a prophetic role, He was no longer accepted with favor. Since His message was contrary to the earlier beliefs and understanding of the people of his own hometown, they tried to kill Him. Their hostile

¹ fathervalan.org

response foreshadowed the rejection that He would face.”² The people were only interested in the miracles and healing power of Jesus or could do for them not in what He might asking of them. Jesus emphasized that God’s intention is to deliver all His people, not only God’s chosen people.

This is the focus of our First Reading: we are called to action and proclaim the good news to all nations. He promised us the strength and protection to accomplish our call: “I for my part today will make you into a fortified city, a pillar of iron, and a wall of bronze to confront all these lands.”³ The mission is collaborative ministry between our God and us, not only our business. We respond, offer, and make ourselves available to God who provides strength and protection to succeed in the mission. “One important point to note in this reading is that God did not call us by accident. Instead, He reflected on it very well before calling us. He knew each one of us personally and still knows us now very well. Also, He knows what He wants us to do for Him. Hence, He calls us by our personal names and reminds us: ‘Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you; before you came to birth I consecrated you; I have appointed you as the prophet of the nations.’ This means that we are not strangers to God and His call. He knows us personally. In our second reading today, Paul reminds us that the driving force for this prophetic mission must be the following cardinal virtues: Love, Faith, and Hope. Faith in God sustains us in our prophetic ministry despite the obstacles we encounter. Also, hope for a bright future motivates us to remain focused and believe that our efforts will not be vain. A prophet or Christian who has these cardinal virtues will succeed in his ministry. Saint Augustine of Hippo once said: ‘Love and do whatever you want to do.’ This simply means that love is the greatest and most important of these virtues. If love is not at the base of our mission, all our efforts might be in vain. A prophet who lacks love for God, the good news, and for the people he called to

² ibid

³ Jeremiah 1: 18 Holy Bible NRSVCE Canadian Bible Society

prophecy is a clashing cymbal. Love must motivate us to follow God's initiative to be his prophets for the salvation of all nations and people."⁴

My sisters and brothers, there are times that we are rejected because of our faith or even giving our stand for what is truth for us. We will even be rejected by our own family or friends because they do not like what we do for our belief. Let us remember, before we are born, we are already chosen to be missionaries of the faith and called to spread faith, hope, and love to others, in or out of season. The Lord will be with us, do not be afraid. As Jesus said: "Love one another as I have love you"⁵ so, let us love and always love because in love we can be a prophet of the Good News of love. My sisters and brothers, be love and love.

Let this be our prayer: "Lord Jesus Christ, you speak about the demanding works of the gospel. Give me strength and protection to always say and do what you preached and lived without fear and doubt. May faith, hope and love abide in me so that I may be your prophet to the nations especially to my family, friends, and community. Amen."

⁴ frcanicenjoku.com

⁵ John 13: 34 Holy Bible NRSVCE Canadian Bible Society