

**4th Sunday after Epiphany
Jan. 30 2022
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In the weaving of our scripture passages today, let us look at the response of Jesus, Jeremiah of the OT and even modern day prophets. What do they have to teach us?

Connecting to the beginning of Jesus' ministry bridges the reading from Luke last week in the reading of the scroll of Isaiah to this week.

The Initial response being amazement and wonder transcends into resentment. This public response forshadowes Jesus' ministry, its rejection by Israel. The witnesses to his testimony are demanding that he do for his hometown what he has done elsewhere to prove himself. Doesn't this sound familiar to you...just like Satan tempting him in the desert?

However, Jesus is not going to bestow special privledges on the people in the room. The good news here is *for the neighbor*, those absent. Sitting in the pews today, we, as baptized Christians recognize Jesus as God's son. Although this Epiphany reading is his revealing of himself,they cannot

stretch beyond their experience without proof. How many people do you know that give up on Christianity due to a lack of proof?

What people are demanding is an outward sign of a miracle. Outward signs. Outward signs may temporarily satisfy the top 3 inches of our heads. In the material world, we can taste, hear, touch, see, or smell. All of society functions this way, a materialistic orientation. Don't get me wrong, we need this for our physical survival, our human operating system. However, exclusive materialistic values can never offer us peace of mind. Our very souls and hearts are at stake. What then shapes the soul of a person?

I discovered part of that answer reading "**The Book of Joy**" which describes the celebratory meeting of Archbishop Desmond Tutu and the Dalai Lama. These men of giant spiritual strength and stature find truest meaning in their relationships. The Dalai Lama explains that a lot of suffering and problems that we have are of our own making. War and violence are created by humans, ourselves.

The joy I witness of the pages of this book spring to life in their enthusiasm. I am stymied by this as I am aware that both of these men suffered for years from dislocation and imprisonment. Yet their hearts are overfilled with exuberant and infectious love. How does that come to be. How do they transcend their suffering.

The answer to this is their disposition of love as the primary call. Cultivated in mediation. Corinthians this week talks of the greater gifts which include love. To have all the material things in the world without love is useless. Love, believes, endures, hopes and nurtures all things.

The love of God cultivated in hearts transcends suffering. In their cases, they exemplified concern for other's well being with compassion and concern as an inward value. This has resulted in transforming social structures themselves for the good of mankind. Their call from God demanded great sacrifice which they lived into without compromise of their faith.

What is the discernment piece for you and for me..because we are all called. We all have a calling. How do we address this? Do only the ordained experience vocation or is it an essential part of every Christians'

religious life?¹. The prophet Jeremiah speaks to something many of us know; we do not choose God; God somehow mysteriously and even against our will chooses us. Jeremiah says that he heard the word of the Lord. The real sense of the passage is that the word of the Lord happened to him. **This was an event.** ²

For us humans then, perhaps what God has in mind for each one of us is a moment, an awareness when we say YES to God. Our faith as baptized Christians is reflected in what we do or what we say. The faith of Christ is revealed in our lives of trust in that provisional love. This love knew you before you born, called you before you even were .

Let us will close with the ***A prayer of Self-Dedication***- found on pg 841 of the Book of Common Prayer: (Let us say together):

Almighty and eternal God, so draw our hearts to *thee*, so guide our minds, so fill our imagination, so control our wills that we may be wholly *thine*, unerringly dedicated unto thee; and then use us, we pray thee, *as thou*

¹ Feasting on the Word , Year C

² David L. Bartlett; Barbara Brown Taylor. Feasting on the Word: Year C, Volume 1: Advent through Transfiguration . Presbyterian Publishing Corporation. Kindle Edition.

wilt, and always to *thy* glory and the welfare of *thy* people ; through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. *Amen*.

God knows each one of us intimately, completely and with unconditional love as his creation. In personally addressing you, be present to that God who formed you in the womb. What does God want you to know in your present reality? What does your appointment by God mean, by virtue of your purpose in life? Do you recognize God with you and for you?³

Jeremiah's response was reassured by God. How will you respond?

David L. Bartlett; Barbara Brown Taylor. Feasting on the Word: Year C, Volume 1: Advent through Transfiguration . Presbyterian Publishing Corporation. Kindle Edition.

³ Jesuit Media Initiative Pray as you Go