

Gaines Congregational United Church of Christ

January 30, 2022

Old Testament Reading; Jeremiah 1:4-10

Responsive Reading; Psalm 71: 1-6

Epistle Reading; 1 Corinthians 13: 1-13

Gospel Reading; Luke 4: 21-30

Sermon Title:

## **PROPHETS WITHOUT HONOR**

**By Rev. Jim Gardner**

Summary; CSI must determine Motive and Modus Operandi, and Why and How.

And then passing through the mist of them He went His way. Jesus was in the synagogue in His home town of Nazareth. He had just read from the words of the prophet Isaiah proclaiming that the Messiah was coming. Jesus sat down and proceeded to tell them that this day this prophecy was fulfilled in their presence. Jesus acknowledged that people would not believe a prophet that had grown up in their midst. Jesus was right, what a surprise, and the neighbors that He had grown up with took Him to a cliff overlooking the town to kill Him. Jesus just walked

away through the mob. This may be a stretch but I believe a little divine intervention came about here. Do you think?

In the time of Jesus, it was the “preacher’s” job to read the word of God and then interpret it. This is still the case but with today’s scriptures it seems to me that my job is not to interpret but proclaim.

In our Old Testament lesson God says that He ordains and calls His messengers before they are even born. I believe that this pertains to each and every one of us. God calls us all to do something that He has specifically designated for us to do before we are even born.

When I was a child, I so wanted to make a positive mark on the world. At that time, I thought that it would not matter to God unless it was some earth-shattering revelation.

When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. When I was a child, I thought a picture was made up of one image but now I know that when I see a picture on a TV screen it is made up of thousands of pixels, or little dots that go together to produce the image we see. I now realize that life on this planet is made up of thousands of small influences that put together reveal God’s plan.

Let’s look at these scriptures as they present a larger picture.

First our Old testament says that God calls us before we are born. The Psalm tells us that it is God that does the calling and that He is involved with our path from before we were born and continues to be with us every step of our lives, thereby enabling us to be able to serve Him.

The gospel shows us that no one gets a free pass. Even Christ Himself is faced with opposition.

We cannot obtain creditability by performing miracles like giving sight to the blind and raising the dead etc. as Jesus did. Jesus once said, "If you cannot believe my words, then believe my works."

We cannot perform the works of Christ and I believe that if we shake our finger at people and yell at them telling them how awful they are, or threaten them by saying things like, "The wages of sin are death" or "Ye must be born again". If we come on this way, I think we will drive people away who were on the verge of becoming believers into denying Christ and anyone that so proclaims Him.

So, what should we do?

I believe the answer to this is spelled out in our Epistle of love.

I have never performed a wedding ceremony where I did not read 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 13. When I was a child I thought as a child. I thought this was limited to just certain personal relationships. I

did not realize at that time, that this is the key to living in the image of the God who created us to do this very thing. God asks us to live our faith. (insert words to The Rose)

A problem here is that many people are afraid to hang their hat on love. The song The Rose addresses the fear of depending on love and ends up showing the power of love. If you change just two words in the song it takes on a whole new meaning. Change “you its only seed” to” Christ its only seed” and change the spelling of, “sun’s love” to “son’s love” and you have a complement to 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 13.

Two phrases that show up on billboards and Face Book are, “God is love” and “Jesus is the answer.” When you put these two concepts together you just might come up with, “Love is the answer.” The problem is that the only way this works is if we see love for everything that it is, and what it isn’t.

Love is not hypocritical. If love is not the reason that you speak with tongues of men and angels, or have the gift of prophecy, or the faith to move mountains, or give generously, then you are just doing it for show so people will say, “OMG, what a wonderful person that is” instead of saying, “wow what a wonderful God is working through that person!” Jesus says, “Let your light so shine before men that they will see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven.” “To God be the glory”. It has to be that way to mean anything at all.

What love is, is that it is humble, selfless, and long lasting. Love is kind, love is not spiteful, love rejoices in truth but does not stick its nose in the air and say, "I told you so". Love is not the only good quality but it is the best. "And now abide faith, hope, love these three; but the greatest of these is love."

OK, so how does love spread the gospel of Jesus Christ? I believe there is a psychology here that most people do not understand.

My wife had an uncanny ability of helping her teenage nieces and nephews find meaningful answers to the questions by not telling them the answers. When an adult gives a teenager an answer it is always suspect. Then again if that teen finds the same answer it is gospel. You know we are all a little like teenagers. We want to find our own answers.

How can love do this? Well OK, this is how I see it. If someone lives 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 13 and is always more upbeat than others around them people will want to know their secret.

If you tell someone that Christ is the answer of your own volition they will not be as apt to buy in as if that is an answer to *their* question. If someone asks you, "How do you do it? How do you keep it all together? Why don't things seem to get you down? You have an open door that they have expressed a desire to go through. This is when you can tell them that for you, it was your association with God and Jesus. If you gently

suggest that they might want to try it and see if it works for them.

Now here is the spoiler. Any teacher will tell you that you can't teach what you don't know. Soooo, if you want to teach the joy of being in a loving relationship with God you need to practice 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 13 so your light will shine before men and God. This is what God called you to do before you were even born. Go for it and Hallelujah and Amen.