

Gaines Congregational United Church of Christ

February 2, 2025

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:**

**Embrace My Heart and Touch My Tongue**

By Rev. Jim Gardner and Jackie Gardner

Summary: We shall know as also we are known.

Jackie:

And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love. LOVE IS IT!

Corinthians says, "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal."

Jim:

Oh yes love may be IT, but IT is worthless If not proclaimed. Jeremiah says, “Then said I, ‘Ah, Lord God! Behold, I cannot speak, for I am a youth.’ But the Lord said to me: ‘Do not say, I am a youth,’ For you shall go to all to whom I send you. And whatever I command you, you shall speak.” IT, must absolutely be voiced!

Jackie:

OK, OK, maybe, but what about 1 Corinthians 13: 8? “Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away.” How can you trust that the prophecies are from God and will be true and not just fall flat?

Jim:

Well, because in Jeremiah God covers that. Verses 9 and 10 say, “Then the Lord put forth His hand and touched my mouth, and the Lord said to me, ‘Behold, I have put My words in your mouth. See, I have this day set you over the nations and over the kingdoms, To root out and to pull down. To destroy and to throw down. To build and to plant.” God’s got this.

Jackie:

I totally believe in God and subscribe to our Psalm reading, “In You, O Lord, I put my trust; Let me never be put to shame. Deliver me in Your righteousness and cause me to escape;

Incline Your ear to me and save me.” But how do I know if I am listening to God or just to my ego? How do I know I am not trying to make myself out to be more than I am?

Jim:

Good question. Many times, people will react to you and give you credit that was meant for God. The Psalmist addresses this in the verses just after our reading today. Verses 7 and 8 say, “I have become a wonder to many. But You are my strong refuge. Let my mouth be filled with Your Praise and with Your glory all the day.”

Way too often when we do and say the things that reflect God people look at us and marvel at what wonderful people we are when they should be seeing what a wonderful God we have. The trouble is that misguided praise feels really good. We are tempted to seek people’s praise rather than directing it to where it belongs. To God. Love for God.

Jackie:

So, we come back to the TRUTH that LOVE IS IT! 1<sup>st</sup> John 4:8 says, “Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.” And on in verse 16 says, “So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in

him.” If we Abide in God, we Abide in Love! God is love, and God is it, so LOVE IS IT!

Jim:

Yes, LOVE IS IT, but the uncomfortable truth is that while love is it, the other truth is that Hate is Real. In our Gospel lesson after Jesus tells the people in the Synagogue that “Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.” He then goes on to tell them that God does not just go to the “chosen” people. He sent Elijah to a gentile widow and Elishia was sent to heal a pagan soldier. This infuriated those “chosen” people and they sought to kill Jesus. The truth is always the truth, but the truth is not always popular. So what do we do?

Jackie:

He says, Will you come and follow me if I but call your name? Will you go where you don’t know and never be the same?

Jim:

Lord, your summons echoes true when you but call my name.

Jackie:

Will you leave yourself behind if I but call your name? Will you care for cruel and kind and never be the same?

Jim:

Let me turn and follow you and never be the same.

Jackie:

Will you let the blinded see if I but call your name? Will you set the prisoners free and never be the same?

Jim:

In your company I'll go where your love and footsteps show.

Jackie:

Will you love the "you" you hide if I but call your name? Will you quell the fear inside and never be the same?

Jim:

Thus, I'll move and live and grow in you and you in me.

Jackie:

Will you use the faith you've found to reshape the world around, through my sight and touch and sound in you and you in me?

Jim:

Let me turn and follow you and never be the same.

Jackie:

Let the love of my heart and words of my mouth be acceptable in your sight. Oh Lord, my strength and redeemer.

[Type here]

Jim:

Hallelujah and Amen!