

Jeremiah 1:4-10
Psalm 71:1-6
1 Corinthians 13:1-13
Luke 4:21-30

Sermon January 30th, 2022

God Is Trustworthy

In our gospel this morning, we see that Jesus' message challenges those who listen to it. Jesus talks about reaching out to people outside their community. When Jesus reads Isaiah in this particular synagogue, Jesus is reading words from a prophet who talked constantly about welcoming the Gentile people into the Israelite community. Jesus, as well as, the early church, are consistent in this messaging. Jesus has come to open the door for Gentiles to enter God's community.

Jesus also talks about welcoming those people who the community has rejected. Tax collectors, sinners, the poor, the incarcerated, the blind. Jesus challenges the people to change the way they see community. This challenge will be a tough pill to swallow for many living in Galilee and Jerusalem.

The prophets preach similar messages to the Israelites. Challenging the community to be hospitable to those from outside their community. Challenging the community to welcome those back into their community who they rejected. The prophets go on to say that if they make these changes God will liberate them from exile. The prophets too come across major push back, as they try to reform their communities.

Does Jesus' message, the prophet's message, challenge you? Do you feel uncomfortable reaching out to people who come from outside your community? People who look different or act different (**Image**)? People who might not see things the way you do?

Do you feel uncomfortable welcoming people in our society who have been rejected or mistreated by the majority?

Are there messages today like the ones we hear from Jesus or the prophets that challenge you? Messages that are pushing you to be more hospitable to others like the messaging we hear about truth and reconciliation with our indigenous neighbours (**Image**)? Or the messaging we hear about caring for creation? Or the messaging we hear about loving our Muslim neighbours?

What is your first response when you hear a message that challenges you? For some of God's people they persecute the prophets when they are challenged by something the prophets say. For other members of God's people, they stubbornly refuse to listen, or argue with the prophets, or distance themselves from this message. For the

Nazarenes, they react in outrage when Jesus speaks his message. Some even try to push him off a cliff.

Now, in hearing this reaction, we can't assume the majority of people that are challenged by Jesus' message want to react violently. In any response to a challenging message, it is only a few who often react violently. For most of us, our reactions are less extreme.

We might stubbornly ignore the message thinking we know better. We might argue against the message or rationalize our own message. We might avoid or run from the message. Like walking out on an argument with your spouse or with a parent. Many times, our first reaction to a challenging message isn't our healthiest reaction.

A few weeks ago, in the United States, they commemorated Martin Luther King Jr. for the things he said and did during the 1950s and 1960s (**Image**). Martin Luther King Jr. was a leader who preached a message that challenged many people in his day. He challenged people to be more hospitable to people of different races. He challenged people to welcome those they once rejected. Unfortunately, someone reacted to his message violently and killed him.

Even though his message was spoken predominately to Americans, his message was heard by many Canadians who were wrestling with similar issues here in Canada. And even though he died, his message lives on as we continue to reform our society to be more hospitable.

Well, in response to our first reactions, Jesus keeps proclaiming his message. The prophets keep speaking on behalf of God. Martin Luther King Jr. keeps challenging people to stop seeing race as a barrier to loving one's neighbour. And they keep proclaiming this message of hospitality even if this proclamation leads to their death from the people they are challenging. As we see with Jesus on the Cross at Golgotha. As we see with Martin Luther King Jr. who was murdered on the balcony of his hotel room in Memphis.

Do you ever wonder why Jesus, Martin Luther King Jr., the prophets like Jeremiah, or any contemporary speaker who shares a similar message keep risking their lives for this message?

In our reading of Jeremiah this morning we hear his call story. And what we see is that God declares God's trustworthiness to Jeremiah and to us. God makes a promise that as we live out this message God will be with us. God will give us what we need to endure the pushback we face. God will give us the words we need to keep proclaiming this message. Believing that there are many people who are listening (**Image**). Many people who are embracing and living out this message.

Yes. Sometimes the consequence of living out this message can lead to persecution or even death. But God stands with us. God will give us what we need to endure even the worst of consequences.

Because God sees that when we believe this message it leads to healing and restoration for people (**Image**). It leads to healing and restoration for community. It leads to reforms that make our world a more loving and hospitable place to live in. It draws us closer to God and one another.

Many people choose to follow Jesus despite the consequences, because they see Jesus as trustworthy. One who will care for their needs. One who will walk with them through darkness into light. They see how empowering Jesus' message is. They believe if people can follow this message, then they will see the social reforms needed to transform their society into a better place for people to live.

Whenever we are feeling challenged by a message that challenges us to be more hospitable or loving to someone who is different from us, or someone whom society has rejected, we are invited to trust in Christ. Believe that Christ will care for our needs as we make the necessary changes in our life and in our society to welcome what we have seen as the other. To make our society a better place for people to live.

When we face persecution or pushback for proclaiming this message, we are invited to trust in God who will give us what we need to endure whatever comes our way. Working through us to bring healing and restoration to people's lives. To our community.

God is trustworthy. Christ is trustworthy.

Let us pray, God thank you for being trustworthy. Help us trust in you with our needs. Help us trust in your son's message as we work towards reforming into a community that is more hospitable and loving to others. **Amen.**

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