

Sermon Notes – February 2, 2025
The Holy Gospel of St. Luke 4: 21-30
Peace Lutheran Church
“When We Least Expect It”

Today's scripture readings have important things to reveal about human beings and about God's actions in the world. Jeremiah shows us that the one appointed to be a prophet is reluctant, unsure of his abilities. God reassures him with promises to give the prophet words and accompany him. In Luke, the story of Jesus' announcement in the synagogue shows the people enraged at His reminding them that during the time of famine, the prophet Elijah did not reserve his powers only for the Israelites, but that he was sent to assist an outsider. And when sickness (a skin disease) was rampant, only someone from a threatening nation (Naaman, a Syrian) was cured.

Unable to hear Jesus' expansive understanding of God's scope, the people were shortsighted. They missed the fact that the world is a teacher, that every encounter offers food for learning, that every proclamation from God's word sends the hearer to a deeper self-understanding and the community to a new vision of its purpose. God's vocational call may leave one skeptical, requiring trust that each moment will bring the wisdom and skill needed. Resentment of favors given to “outsiders” becomes a vehicle for expanding a community's concept of its responsibility by reflection on its privilege.

The crowd wants a miracle from Jesus, but like Jeremiah, He cannot build up until He has pulled down. The prophet is understood by few; the crowd is the ignorant many. This may have an enormous lesson for people of our time who proclaim that the marginalized and oppressed stand in the light of God's favor. To behold this truth is to behold, as well, how far we find ourselves from it. We reject the ones who tear down in order to build up, who hold up a mirror to our sin, including Jesus.

Those who fail to expand the circle of people considered worthy of health and welfare and happiness (that is, the “other”) continue to see dimly in a mirror. They cannot honestly apprehend themselves because they cannot find the compassion to want God's healing for all people.

The church carries and embodies God's abiding love by speaking faith (what God has done and is doing) and hope (what God will do). The God who fully knows us leads us out of our closed and protective selves and into our true selves. We, as the body of Christ here at Peace Lutheran, are bold, kind, loving, and called to be fearless. Our Lord has made us this way. As I have been told many times, stop worrying. We have learned many valuable lessons along our road together! We have come this far by faith in Christ alone.