

A Bible Bullet (aimed at the heart)

Fourth Sunday of Ordinary Time, Cycle C
Jeremiah 1:4-5,17-19; 1 Cor. 13:4-13; Luke 4:21-30

This week's gospel is a continuation of what we began last week. The words of the prophet Isaiah have been read in the synagogue by Jesus. Jesus has indicated that the good news of the verses is fulfilled in their hearing that day. That sounds great to them until they remember who He is. That's where we find the story this week. Is this man not Joseph the carpenter's son? How does He dare to tell us that our faith is not deep enough, not true enough, to expect to witness the wonders of God's miracles in our midst?

This is no way to win friends and influence people, but that is not the purpose for which Jesus has come. His role in this incident is much like that of a prophet. Our first reading is from the prophet Jeremiah. We read about the initial call of the prophet and his great reluctance to answer God's call to ministry. Jeremiah knows that his job will not be a popular one and he thinks of all the reasons why it should not be himself who answers. The chapter is short and really should be read in full to get the full impact of Jeremiah's fear and the overpowering call of God.

If we are not experiencing a difficult time being Christian, perhaps we are not yet fully meeting the challenge of the call. Each prophet sent by God struggles (I use the present tense because one who speaks the word of God is a prophet. Welcome to the club!). The popular phrase of the day, the current trend, the latest secular philosophy will win the hearts of many. There is very little chance, however, that it will answer the "call".

The prophet Jeremiah speaks to us this Sunday about his own call to serve the Lord as a prophet. The times were not kind to prophets who spoke God's truth. Jeremiah did everything he could to convince

his people to put their trust in God, not in an alliance with the Egyptians. For this, Jeremiah is hated, hated for calling the people to reform their lives and to stop oppressing the orphans and widows. Jeremiah was truly countercultural. Because the people did not accept God's message through this good man, they paid the price of disobedience through their captivity in Babylon for 70 years.