

SOSJ Catholic Men's Bible Study

"As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another." – Proverbs 27:17

Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time—Cycle C

Jeremiah 1:4-5,17-19

(Psalm 71:1-6,15-17)

1 Corinthians 12:31—13:13

Luke 4:21-30

Overview of the Gospel:

- This Sunday's Gospel is a continuation from last Sunday's (Luke 4:14-21). Jesus, speaking in the synagogue in Nazareth, has announced that the Old Testament prophecies have been fulfilled in him; that the long awaited Messiah is here (see last week's study).
- The people are at first filled with excitement at his words. Their amazement turns to skepticism, however, as they recall that they have known Jesus and his family his whole life and he has never seemed exceptional or performed miracles for his own townsfolk, many of whom were relatives (see Mark 6:1-6a).
- They are further incensed when Jesus, pointing out their lack of faith, compares them to the faithless people of Israel in the time of the prophets. These saw no miracles by the prophets, except for the despised Gentiles, or non-Jews (1 Kings 17:1-16 and 2 Kings 5:1-14).
- In a foreshadowing of what will later happen to many of his followers (Acts 7:58, 13:50), the crowd attempts to avoid hearing Jesus' message by getting rid of him—permanently. Jesus, however, is always the master of his own destiny.

Catechism of the Catholic Church: §§ 547—549

547 Jesus accompanies his words with many "mighty works and wonders and signs", which manifest that the kingdom is present in him and attest that he was the promised Messiah.

548 The signs worked by Jesus attest that the Father has sent him. They invite belief in him. To those who turn to him in faith, he grants what they ask. So miracles strengthen faith in the One who does his Father's works; they bear witness that he is the Son of God. But his miracles can also be occasions for "offence"; they are not intended to satisfy people's curiosity or desire for magic. Despite his evident miracles some people reject Jesus; he is even accused of acting by the power of demons.

549 By freeing some individuals from the earthly evils of hunger, injustice, illness and death, Jesus performed messianic signs. Nevertheless he did not come to abolish all evils here below, but to free men from the gravest slavery, sin, which thwarts them in their vocation as God's sons and causes all forms of human bondage.

2270 Human life must be respected and protected absolutely from the moment of conception. From the first moment of his existence, a human being must be recognized as having the rights of a person - among which is the inviolable right of every innocent being to life. (Cf. CDF, *Donum vitae* I,1).

--Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you. (Jer 1:5; cf. Job 10:8-12; Ps 22:10-11)

--My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately wrought in the depths of the earth. (Psalm 139:15)

1826 "If I...have not charity," says the Apostle, "I am nothing." Whatever my privilege, service, or even virtue, "if I...have not charity, I gain nothing." (1 Cor. 13:1-4) Charity is superior to all the virtues. It is the first of the theological virtues: "So faith, hope, charity abide, these three. But the greatest of these is charity." (1 Cor.13:13)

It is human to err; it is devilish to remain willfully in error. -St. Augustine

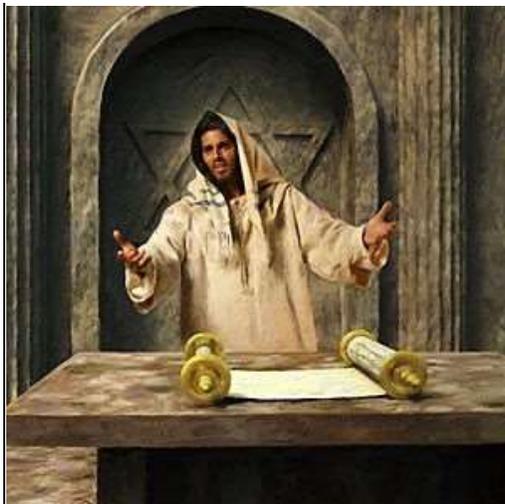
Remember to read and meditate on the daily Mass readings!

"Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."

Gospel Reading: *Luke 4:21-30*

Meditation: Do you believe that God wants to act with power in your life today--power to set you free from sin and hurtful desires, fear and oppression? Throughout the Scriptures we see God performing mighty acts to save his people from death and destruction - from Noah's ark that spared his family from the flood of wickedness that had spread across the land to Moses and the Israelites who crossed through the parting waters of the Red Sea as they fled the armies of Pharaoh their slave Master and oppressor.

Throughout the Gospel accounts Jesus praised individuals who put their faith in God as they remembered the great and wonderful deeds he had performed time and again. Jesus even praised outsiders - non-Jews and pagans from other lands who had heard about the mighty deeds of the God of Israel. One example Jesus mentioned was Naaman the pagan army commander from Syria who was afflicted with leprosy - a debilitating skin disease that slowly ate away the flesh (2 Kings 5:1-15). Naaman's slave-girl was a young Jewish woman who had faith in God and compassion for Naaman her master. She urged him to seek healing from Elisha, the great prophet of Israel. When Naaman went to the land of Israel to seek a cure for his leprosy, the prophet Elisha instructed him to bathe seven times in the Jordan River. Naaman was indignant at first,



but then repented and followed the prophet's instructions. In doing so he was immediately restored in body and spirit.

When Jesus first proclaimed the good news of God's kingdom to his own townspeople at Nazareth (Luke 4:23-27), he did not hesitate to confront them with their sin of indifference and unbelief. He startled his listeners in the synagogue at Nazareth with a seeming rebuke that no prophet or servant of God could receive honor among his own people. He then angered them when he complimented Gentiles (non-Jews) who had shown more faith in God than the "chosen ones" of Israel. Some who despised the Gentiles (non-Jews) even spoke of them as "fuel for the fires of hell." Jesus' praise for "outsiders" offended the ears of his own people because they were blind-sighted to God's merciful plan of redemption for all the nations. The word of rebuke spoken by Jesus was met with indignation and hostility. The Nazarenes forcibly threw him out of their town and would

have done him physical harm had he not stopped them.

We all stand in need of God's grace and merciful help every day and every moment of our lives. Scripture tells us that "the steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning" (Lamentations 3:22-23). God gives grace to the humble who seek him with expectant faith and with a repentant heart that wants to be made whole and clean again.

The Lord Jesus will set us free from every sinful habit and every harmful way of relating to our neighbor, if we allow him to cleanse and heal us. If we want to walk in freedom and grow in love and holiness, then we must humbly renounce our sinful ways and submit to Christ's instruction and healing discipline in our lives. Scripture tells us that the Lord disciplines us *for our good that we may share his holiness* (Hebrews 12:10). Do you want the Lord Jesus to set you free and make you whole again? Ask him to show you the way to walk in his healing love and truth.

"Lord Jesus, teach me to love your ways that I may be quick to renounce sin and willfulness in my life. Make me whole and clean again that I may delight to do your will."

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Sons of St. Joseph Catholic Men's Bible Study

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