

Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time 1-30-2022

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St. Paul tells us that God's greatest **gift** to us is the gift of love ... that kind of love that flows to us from the Father through Jesus Christ. St. Paul defines this love for us by telling us both what it is ... and what it isn't. He cautions us that we can do all kinds of wonderful things ... but if they are done **without** love ... they will mean ... **nothing!**

This kind of love is unselfish ... it is unmotivated. It seeks nothing for self. This kind of love is a sacrificial love and caring love ... the kind of love that makes a parent work even at a job they **hate** ... in order to care for their family. This kind of love is why people choose jobs that pay much less than other jobs ... like teacher ... or social worker ... because they want to serve others.

Love is what makes a person volunteer at our Morning Glory Ministries to serve the poor. Love is what makes young parents bring their young children to Mass **every** Sunday and raise **them** in the faith ... to raise **them** to have this kind of love.

Whether a person **feels** love or not does not matter, if they have chosen love as a way of life. It's always much easier to love when we feel that warm **glow** inside. But our love becomes even stronger when we no longer feel it ... but still **continue** ... to love. Jesus Christ is our perfect example. He chose love as the meaning of his human life and always acted out of love. He certainly did not **want** to suffer and die on the Cross ... He prayed that: "... this cup might pass from me ...". But out of love He suffered and died anyway.

One **could** logically think that if we live **this** kind of love ... others will respond by showing love to us ... but nothing could be further from the truth. The kind of love we are talking about is loving as our God **wants** us to love ... and **that** ... will not **always** make us popular. In our first reading: Out of His divine Love God calls Jeremiah to be a prophet to His people. Out of love and obedience Jeremiah responds. Through him ... God communicates his message of love. Jeremiah is directed to give a prophetic witness to God, whose saving justice and compassion yearn to steer a wayward, stressed-out people away from impending disaster. Warned about the obstacles he will face; Jeremiah is instructed by God to stand firm. God warns him: "They will fight against you but not prevail over you, for I am with you to deliver you, says the LORD".

It is a love that enables us to be compassionate, understanding, patient, forgiving and accepting of others. Love never discriminates against others but rather sustains us with courage, with power to endure and carry us through life's challenges.

Our Gospel reading today begins with the closing words of last weeks Gospel reading: "Today this Scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing." And it goes on to say: "And all spoke highly of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth." Ah! But how quickly things change! Their admiration quickly faded and they even wanted to **kill** Him when He reminded them ... from their **own** scriptures ... that God chose to send Elijah to a widow in the land of Sidon in **preference** to the widows in Israel ... and that Naaman the Syrian ... a leper ... was cleansed **in preference** to the lepers in Israel ... the people in the were all filled with fury. Afterall ... how could God possibly love a non-Jew in preference to His own people! And if He could ... they surely did **not** want to be reminded of it. They did not want to **hear** ... that **God** ... was **not** exclusively theirs! God's love does not discriminate ... nor must ours!

Our God loves all His Children and wishes all to be saved. Our God does not pick and choose whom He will love ... nor does the true Christian ... nor must we.