

## **Fourth Sunday in the Ordinary Time: Loving Like Jesus fulfills God's Word**

Jeremiah 1:4-5, 17-19; Psalm 71:1-2,3-4,5-6,15-17; 1 Corinthians 12:31-13:13; Luke 4:21-30

Dear family and friends of the Co-Cathedral of St. Theresa,

"Today this Scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing" (Lk 4:21).

These words of our Lord Jesus reveal his mission to inaugurate the prophecy of old about the messianic times that the Jewish people looked forward to – the fulfillment for liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, the oppressed go free and proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord (cf Lk 4:18-19). These are the messianic blessings that our Lord Jesus came to inaugurate. But the people of Nazareth found his claim preposterous because they knew his family, so they doubted his credentials to inaugurate the deliverance they longed to happen.

What is fulfilled instead, Jesus' own people rejected him. He said, "Amen, I say to you, no prophet is accepted in his native place" (Lk 4:24). He placed himself in the company of the Old Testament prophets, like Elijah and Elisha, many of whom were rejected and even killed by their fellow Israelites. We heard the people of Jesus' town drove him out of the town and tried to kill him. But this violent reaction didn't stop him from fulfilling what he had already started to unveil. Jesus may have withdrawn himself from those who refused to accept his message, but he didn't and never withdrew his offer to anyone. Such is our Savior! Yes, we haven't rejected his offer, but sometimes we take it for granted, like an unread email message or it just goes to the junk mail. We ought to have a different response.

What is it being fulfilled in our hearing? Or better still, what is it already been fulfilled in our hearing? Let us step back in time for a moment and ponder what is already fulfilled:

First, what is fulfilled is the salvation now offered to all – that our Lord Jesus, who fulfills the prophecy of old, saves us from sin and death. The words of the Exultet at the Easter Vigil proclaim this, "O death where is your sting?" It mocks death for its defeat. It is one way of saying that salvation is at hand because of the passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus! We are saved! But the question will be, do you believe that you are saved? Yes, but not yet. Yes, because Jesus died for our sins. And not yet because we are still on our pilgrim way. What is fulfilled is that, in Jesus, the offer of salvation continues in our day and age.

Second, what is fulfilled is the birth of a new people of God gifted with the divine life through the Sacrament of Baptism. We are baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, which make us sharers of the divine life and heirs to the Kingdom of God. We are blessed with the holiness of God, and we are a people set apart. But the question would be: Do you believe that we are holy people? Yes, but not yet. Yes, because of the Sacrament of Baptism, we became a new creation and clothed ourselves with the life of Christ. During the vesting of the white cloth, we are reminded to bring our dignity unstained into everlasting life with our family and friends who are to help us by their word and example. And not yet, because it is an ongoing process.

Third, what is fulfilled is our Lord Jesus' abiding and palpable presence in our time. What existed in eternity is now among and within us through the Holy Spirit. It is communicated through the Church and Holy Sacraments. When a priest or deacon baptizes a baby, it is Jesus who baptizes; when a priest anoints the sick, it is Jesus who anoints; when a priest forgives sins, it is Jesus who forgives; when you receive the Holy Eucharist, you received Jesus, his divinity and humanity; when you spend time in adoration before the Blessed Sacrament, you are spending time with the Lord.

In faith, we can say that Jesus is undoubtedly present with us in the gathered assembly, speaking to us through the proclamation of the Word and the prayers of the Holy Mass, through the breaking of bread. All this is to feed us by his divine life. All this is to let the gift of holiness grow like a mustard seed. All this is to keep burning our awareness that our home is heaven, that we don't belong to death; we belong to heaven.

"Today, this Scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing." Our Lord Jesus already fulfilled his messianic blessings. But to what extent are we living it? Prophet Jeremiah and St. Paul have wisdom for us to live by this week.

Prophet Jeremiah ponders that before we are formed in the womb of our parents, God knows us; that before we are conceived, we are in the mind of God (cf Jer 1:5). We are not a product of chance, but God wills us to be born, and we are born with a purpose. Once this truth is understood, once this truth is accepted, then and only then can we start talking about commitment, responsibility, and mission. It begins from receiving God's love and loving as he loves.

St. Paul talks about love as the greatest of the gifts. He calls it "the excellent way" and challenges us to strive eagerly and grow joyfully with it (cf 1Cor 12:31). He describes it as a patient, kind, not jealous, not pompous, not inflated, not rude, does not seek its own interests, not quick-tempered, does not brood over injury, does not rejoice over wrongdoing, it bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things (cf 2 Cor 13:4-7). These are descriptions drawn from his encounter with the risen Lord's love, which he witnessed. Love attracts, captivates, and embraces everyone; it heals, transforms, and unites all into one Body of Christ. All are in vain without it.

Jesus fulfills his Messianic blessings among us. Let us keep it visible in our lives.

God bless you!

Fr. Manny Hewe