

Sunday Morning Worship at Brentwood – Jan 31, 2016

Fourth Sunday after Epiphany

Notes for the sermon on Rejecting Jesus

Luke 4:22-30 – Sermon Text = Luke 4:28-29

**When they heard this,
all in the synagogue were filled with rage.
They got up, drove him out of the town,
and led him to the brow of the hill
on which their town was built,
so that they might hurl him off the cliff.
(Luke 4:28-29)**

[Hymns = 371, 358, 721, 722]

**Key focus = there is something about what Jesus is saying and doing
that enrages the good people around him, the respectable and established types
– the church-goers in town – they were so enraged that they tried to kill him -
- what were they enraged by? – are we enraged by it?
– if so, what are we going to do about it?**



Just what is Jesus doing that enrages the hometown crowd?

- Reminding his listeners of the prophetic core of their religious tradition – the call to be a blessing to all creation and the ways in which they are failing to participate in that work – calling for changes that threaten their ways of living that are rooted in fear of the stranger and in dividing the world into them and us

- Claiming that he is the Chosen One to launch the final phase of God's reconciliation with and reorientation of a creation gone astray – Israel's long-awaited Messiah of peace, justice, and beauty – a poor kid from the other side of the cart path – how dare he be so pretentious!

Are we enraged?

- Rage = anger that gets out of hand – explosive, uncontrolled – grounded in fear
- This story raises questions for every generation that re-reads it about whether they are enraged by this Jesus, by the way the God of the Gospel took flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth – are we equally enraged by this Jesus? – are we fearful and threatened by what Jesus teaches and does? – are we constantly rejecting him, just as his hometown did so long ago?
- And if not, why not? – have we managed to sanitize and domesticate the enraging bits of the Jesus story and example to the point where he is simply a supportive friend in everything we do?
- Or is he one of those friends that pierces through our illusions and delusions to name the fears that hold us back from accepting God's promise of the grace and flourishing that comes with participating in God's SHALOM?

What overcomes such rage?

- The realization, through the work of the Holy Spirit, that this enraging grace is precisely the love that will overcome our fear and set us free to flourish together
- In our discomfort are sown the seeds of our salvation – liberated to participate in the gradual but inevitable triumph of God's SHALOM for all the earth
- If our rage is rooted in our fears, then this is the love that casts out those fears – "Fear not, for I am with you" – the constant refrain of God throughout the Scriptures as he invites people to join him in blessing the creation

So what?

- Remember that Jesus calmly walked through the angry crowds and got on with his mission – grounded in God's love that casts out fear and overcomes rage
- Such resilience in the face of rage comes from Jesus' deep loyalty to the law and prophets of his faith, summarized so eloquently as love God with your whole being, love your neighbours, and love yourselves
- When we have been moved by the Holy Spirit beyond our own rage and rejection, we begin to see more and more opportunities to share the love of God in Christ with the people we meet so that the world may become a place of blessing
- Will you watch for those opportunities this week? – will you step into them with the calm and courage that Jesus offers?