

Lessons for Fourth Sunday after Epiphany

January 31, 2016

Psalm 71:1-6 (7-11) (*Antiphon: v. 12*) ~ *An expression of confidence in God's sustaining presence.*

Jeremiah 1:4-10 (17-19) ~ *God expressed His love for His people by choosing Jeremiah to turn them back.*

1 Corinthians 12:31b-13:13 ~ *When the gifts of the Spirit are used in love, they build up the body of Christ.*

\\Luke 4:31-44 ~ *Jesus healed many with His loving power and gathered people with the news of the Kingdom.*

GATHERING THE TEXTS: Let God's Love Have Its Way.

God's love is all-encompassing. God's love is beyond comprehension. It grasped Jeremiah before his birth and claimed him for the difficult job of confronting God's people with their waywardness. Jesus confronted demons and healed the sick because God's love compelled Him to share the good news of the Kingdom in words and actions. Although God's love is patient and kind, at times we will have to give up things we hold dear because God looks beyond the moment and forms us for His eternal purpose. Even when our lives are threatened, God's love wins out.

PRAYER BEFORE THE SERVICE: God of mercy and of grace, do not let me stumble over words of correction or rebuke, but let me hear You speak in love through Your law as You lead me to depend more and more on Christ my Savior. Guide me by Your Holy Spirit as I live lovingly toward others. Amen.

STEWARDSHIP THOUGHT: God has entrusted us with many material blessings and has called us to use them in ways that are guided by His love for even the least among us. If we use them without love, they become demonic tools that tear apart the fellowship of Christ's body.

OFFERING PRAYER: O gracious God, it is Your way
to bless us from above.
Grant us to care for those each day
who need to know Your love. Amen.

CONVICTION AND COMFORT: By His Spirit God gives us many gifts, which can be used in many ways. Often we use them to call attention or bring influence to ourselves. Jesus has come to us in love as a servant, healing us not only of diseases and destructive spirits, but also of the selfish spirit that places us over and above others. Along with the gifts comes the responsibility to exercise them in loving ways that build up the body of Christ, as well as trust that sees God dealing in love with us through others in the faith even when they point out our unloving actions to call us back to God's mercy.