

**Church of the Divine Love**  
**FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY**

**JANUARY 30, 2022**

**10:15 AM**

**HOLY EUCHARIST, RITE II**

THE WORD OF GOD

Processional Hymn **#671 – Amazing grace! how sweet the sound**

Opening Acclamation page 355

Collect for Purity page 355

Gloria (sung) page 356

Collect of the Day - lectionary sheet insert

First Lesson: **Jeremiah 1:4-10**

Psalm 71:1-6

Second Lesson: **1 Corinthians 13:1-13**

Gradual Hymn **#448 – O love, how deep**

Gospel: **Luke 4:21-30**

Sermon – The Rev. Jean Lenord Quatorze

Nicene Creed page 358

General Thanksgivings pages 836, 837

Confession of Sin page 360

The Peace

Welcome and Announcements

THE HOLY COMMUNION

Offertory Hymn **#530 – Spread, O spread, thou mighty word**

Doxology (sung)

The Great Thanksgiving:

Eucharistic Prayer B page 367

Sanctus (S-130 in hymnal)	page 362
The Lord's Prayer	page 364
The Breaking of the Bread, Anthem & Prayer	page 337
The Communion of the People	
Communion Hymn – <b>#711 – Seek ye first the kingdom of God</b>	
Post Communion Prayer	page 365
Prayer for Peace – on insert	
Prayer of St. Francis	page 833
Dismissal Hymn <b>#599 – Lift every voice and sing</b>	

#### Prayer for the New Year:

O God our Creator, you have divided our life into days and seasons, and called us to acknowledge your providence year after year. Accept our praise and thanksgiving for this past year and hear our prayers for the new year. Plant in every heart, we pray, the love of him who is the Savior of the world, Jesus. Grant that we who begin this year in his Name, may complete it to his honor and glory. Pardon our transgressions of the past and guide us by your Holy Spirit that we may turn our feet into your paths, serve you in peace, and live in your presence. All this we ask in the holy name of your Son, Jesus, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, One God, in glory everlasting. Amen.

## Sermon Sunday January 30<sup>th</sup>, 2022

Jeremiah 1: 4-10; Psalm 71: 1-6; 1 Corinthians 13: 1-13; Luke 4: 21-30

**Lord I have studied, but I need your strength. I have prepared, but I need your power. I am willing, and I want to, but only you can make me able. Let the word of my mouth, and the meditation of all our hearts be acceptable to you, O Lord, our God, and our redeemer! Amen.**

### **Beloved people of God,**

The book of Jeremiah is about being empty, unsure, and uncomfortable. It is about seeing beyond the expected. It is about hardship, strangeness, doubt. It is about survival. How do you survive when the pieces of your community life are destroyed, taken away, and no longer working?

Babylon had invaded Judah (the southern part of what we know now as Palestine or Israel). Three times Judah was splintered into factions. The ruling class was pro-Egyptian. Jeremiah and his followers were pro-Babylon. By the time Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians in 587, thousands of people were killed, and the infrastructure of the city had collapsed. What do you do as a believer? You ask questions. Had God forgotten the people and the covenant at Mount Sinai with Moses? Was God powerless? Was there a future? Jeremiah remains unmarried and bears no children, a biblical symbol of the end of life in the Promised Land. He's imprisoned and left to die. But he lives. Most of the time, no one listens to him.

It is a political book, as much of the Bible is. It tells us the truth about sin: about what we humans often construct with impure motives. We construct systems that destroy instead of buildup. We find the nation of Israel torn apart, and the northern tribes have long ago been carried off into exile. In the southern kingdom, more evil kings have sat on the throne than good ones. Jeremiah is called into his prophetic ministry during the reign of Josiah, one of the good kings, but his work will continue through four more regimes, and he will see the last of Judah's kings carried off to Babylon. Jeremiah will witness the destruction of the Temple, and the people of Judah being led into captivity. His ministry is a long one, but Jeremiah is not what you might call a success story, at least not by human standards. No wonder he is reluctant to answer the call, much as Moses was reluctant to respond to his particular calling centuries before. Yet, God is constantly equipping people for the call that will come. How often do people find themselves called into a line of work they had never considered, given work that they never in their wildest dreams ever thought they would do, only to discover that God had been equipping them for years for that specific task! This is exactly what happened to Jeremiah. It must have come as a surprise to Jeremiah that God had been preparing him as a prophet. Jeremiah had good reason to feel confused. God simply wants his people to love him freely, as he loves them. Time and again, he has called his people to repentance and faithfulness. Even when they fail and turn away, he does not give up on the people he loves.

Jeremiah may have been surprised to hear God's call, but he answered it, however unwillingly. His work would be difficult, and he would suffer imprisonment, persecution, false accusations of treason, and forced exile to Egypt. He would be forbidden to marry or have children, he would see King Jehoiakim destroy his prophetic writing, and he would search for just one righteous person without finding any. By all accounts, Jeremiah's ministry would best be described as a failure. His calls to repentance would go unheeded, and his warnings would fall on deaf ears. Through the reign of five different kings, he would

risk everything, even his own life, to proclaim God's word. He wouldn't do it happily, there's a reason why his other book in the Old Testament is called "Lamentations." Even in this first conversation with God, we get the clear image of a difficult task. No wonder Jeremiah balked. He could see the risks to his personal safety – why else would God say, "Don't be afraid of the people to whom I'm sending you. I will rescue you from them"? Those aren't encouraging words, really. And even the announcement that Jeremiah would be appointed over nations and kingdoms doesn't sound so enticing when the verbs God uses are more negative than positive: "build and plant" have a hard time standing up to "pluck up, pull down, destroy, overthrow." These aren't comforting words God gives to Jeremiah. They are challenging words, dangerous words.

In the gospel lesson for today Jesus knew his ministry was going to be rough. He knew he would ultimately "fail" just as Jeremiah's had done. But here's the thing: we don't get to decide what failure looks like. God did not call Jeremiah to convert the people of Judah, only to proclaim God's word to them. If Jeremiah was expecting hundreds and thousands of people to repent and begin living according to God's plan for them, he was deeply disappointed. In the same way, Jesus failed to overthrow the Roman government as Messiah was expected to do. Instead, he died a horrible death, nailed to a cross. That looked like failure to many of the people who watched him die. But we don't get to decide what failure looks like. God's idea of success can't be measured in numbers of converts or military conquests. God measures success in lives changed, in relationships restored. God measures success in every soul redeemed, in every person who turns away from death and sin, toward everlasting life. God measures success in the depth of love we show to people who are not like us, in the way our faith grows in maturity and richness, in the way our lives look more and more like the life of Jesus Christ, and less like the broken lives we leave behind when we choose to follow him.

Pastor Matt Kennedy writes, "Experts who study organizational change say that groups basically have three phases of any transition they face: stability, de-stabilization, and new orientation. Every transition involves all three, and the most anxious moment in any change is going from stability to de-stabilization. This is what you see in the story of Israel in the Wilderness. When you enter that moment of destabilization, there is a strong gravitational pull back to the stable place, even if that stable place was being a slave in Egypt." But for transitions to lead us into the new beginning God has in mind for us, we must be strong in faith, centered on Christ Jesus, depending completely on the power of the Holy Spirit to lead us through the anxiety of wilderness. Because going through the wilderness is the only way to get to the promised land. What does it mean for us to be centered and sent? Will we limit our view to a cloudy vision, constricted by a tiny lens in a viewfinder? Or will we open our eyes wide to the possibility God has in mind for us, and take in the broad vision of God's call? It will not be easy. I assure you of that. But it can be fruitful, and we can experience spiritual renewal in ourselves that leads to a spiritual awakening in our community. Following Jesus is very risky business, and we don't get to decide what success looks like. Sometimes clouds of doubt obscure our vision, and we are unwilling to take a risk.

It may feel like we are teetering on the edge of a precipice, and the fog is obscuring our path. It may feel like we are entering the wilderness as we move through the changes, we see necessary for our own growth and deepening discipleship. It may even feel, at times, like we are failing miserably. But God gives us his promise that He will be with us every step of the way. Let us claim that promise and go with God. Amen.

Masks are required during the service.

SUNDAY – 4 EPIPHANY      10:15 AM      HOLY EUCHARIST, RITE II      (also on zoom)  
(The Annual Parish Meeting has been postponed until next Sunday)

MONDAY      8:00 AM      AA MEETING

WEDNESDAY      7:00 PM      AL-ANON MEETING

THURSDAY      10AM-2PM      THRIFT SHOP  
8:00 PM      AA MEETING

SATURDAY      10AM-2PM      THRIFT SHOP

SUNDAY – 5 EPIPHANY      10:15 AM      HOLY EUCHARIST, RITE II      (also on zoom)  
11:15 AM      PARISH ANNUAL MEETING

SUPPORT THE FOOD DRIVE – DROP-OFF IN THE KITCHEN

### **PARISH PRAYER LIST**

Give to all who suffer the refreshing waters of your compassion and healing.  
Make them dwell in the safety of your care even in the midst of all that troubles  
them. Especially we remember before you:

Girard Bishop

Chrissy Neville

Bob Curley

Nathan Treadwell

John Loubengeiger

Dorothy

Chris Dickson

Kate Jones

Grace Schinella

Michael Echevarria	John Rocco	Robert Sweat
Martinisi Family	Michael & Family	Warren
Charlotte H.	Bernie Walther	Sylvia
Mo (Rachael)	Bill Conklin Sr.	Laura
Anthony Paribello	Barbara Curran	Taylor
Ciara	Gabriel	Aidan
Elodie	Del	Julia
People of Haiti	Parkhurst Family	Tim
Theresa K.	Amy E.	Jason
Christopher & Family	Victims of Natural Disasters	

Help us to speak words of encouragement and offer deeds of kindness to them. Bring us with them, into the unending joy of your kingdom. Amen