

Pastor Roy's sermon from February 3, 2019

In today's introduction to the life of Jeremiah, he is reminded that it is God who saves the day. Each day. Each time. Without fail. Without exception. Not Jeremiah, not me, not you. But God. Over nations and kingdoms, to pluck up and pull down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant. God's work. Jeremiah's voice, freely spoken, the divine message flows through him. In humility he learns to receive the message and pass it on. He learns to love his people by passing on God's love, God's peace—the good life of God which has the power to transform every aspect, every nook and cranny of Israel's religious, political, economic, social world. Jeremiah's message humbly passed along from his investment in listening to God to the people has the power to change, to lift up, to bring a new quality of life.

But Jeremiah must remember that it is God's message of wisdom and mercy, not his. All he has to do is be willing. Open. Truly open to hearing something new from God. Not just repeating what he has always felt or believed, but listening, carefully listening for the life changing message of God. This is not a message that keeps him or Israel, or us comfortable, but which wakes up the life of God in its full richness, within us and around us. That is no small thing.

In I Corinthians 13, Paul thinks about prophesy and this life of God we call faith. He says, "We know in part, we prophesy in part, but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end. Now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully. Now abide faith, hope, love, but the greatest of these is love." Faith and hope and love are all related. But what is faith without love? And what is hope without love?

Perhaps another way of putting it is that love is the foundation for hope and faith. Or, the most essential of these is love. Hope and faith are all about God's love and the planting and building of love within us. Love is a powerful force—constantly underestimated. But faithful love is anything but passive. It is quite active. And faithful love is like the coming of Spring, it cannot be stopped even as it cannot be forced until it's time has come.

Jeremiah doesn't speak much of his love for his audience. But he does speak of the love of God, the passion of God for all the nations and for his people Israel. Nothing but love could motivate the prophets of the Old Testament. If you read

and meditate on their words, you will be moved by this love which is satisfied only by a willing heart.

Is this perhaps why Jesus responds so unexpectedly to his townsfolk? He knows them, so he can cut straight to the point. Perhaps they react violently because they are not willing to go in a new-open to God-direction. They are not open or willing to seek God's future. They are stuck fast in their own past and miss out on the chance to learn with Jesus.

Love makes us humble and willing to listen. Violence and explosive anger are signs of closedness to God's message of peace, humility, and courage. Jeremiah learns to listen and speak without fear because he is moved by love. Jesus and Paul did the same. May we also listen carefully for the words and deeds of Love which are always available to those who listen and then courageously enact the words of God.