

4th Sunday in Ordinary Time Year C - Jer 4:1-10 Lk 4:21-30

1. Amidst the flurry of reporting
 - a. about last week's State of the Union Address
2. And the furor in the press
 - a. About the war in the Middle East.
3. There was one news item that went almost unnoticed -
 - a. The United States government announced that it would now require American passports of ALL its citizens for an air trip outside the United States;
 - i. And in 2008 for all other methods of transportation.
4. Applications for passports exploded,
 - a. as the millions of Americans who planned a mid winter vacation to the Carribean
 - b. suddenly discovered that if they left,
 - i. they could not depend on their driver's license to get them back in.
 - (1) like they did last year.
5. Governments in Canada and the Carribean protested
6. But not surprisingly most Americans just accepted it,
 - a. seeing it as just another part of American life in the 21st century.
 - b. which in case you haven't noticed it,
 - i. From the gated communities in the suburbs,
 - (1) where you need an invitation just to visit a friend.
 - ii. to the fortress-like defenses that now ring the White House in Washington,
 - iii. From the planned "Security fence"
 - (1) that is to run along our southern border with Mexico,
 - iv. To the new requirements that every foreign national has to endure
 - (1) just to come to the US even for a vacation,
 - c. Has become a life increasingly filled with walls, barriers and lines.
7. And for the majority of us, that is just fine.
 - a. Because we live in a nation increasingly afraid
 - i. Lou Dobbs turned his moribund news program on CNN into a ratings powerhouse by attacking the presence of illegal immigrants on American soil.
 - ii. Television dramas such as FOX 's show 24 are wildly popular in no small part because they show a nation at war with terrorists, and comfort us with the promise that out there somewhere there is someone like Jack Bauer protecting us.
 - iii. Preachers and televangelists, still rage against university professors and scientists gays and artists and even actors- seeing them all as a Godless threat to our country.
 - b. And because of this fear we build walls, erect fences and seek to divide us from them.
8. And yet despite this fear, of which we are reminded at every turn
 - a. despite our increasing gift for wall erecting, barrier building and line drawing,

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9. We struggle to understand the anger of the people to Jesus that day in Nazareth.
 - a. And yet we shouldn't, for we really understand it all too well.
 10. Just last week we heard Jesus proclaim the words of the prophet Isaiah concerning the jubilee;
 - a. A time where the world is revealed as God's world,
 - b. and remade the way God would have it be.
 11. We heard their delight at his words then,
 - a. and their amazement at his claim that from that moment on
 - b. he would remake the world the way God would have it be.
 - i. That he would be their jubilee.
 12. This morning's gospel comes right after last week's
 - a. and by the end of it, those people who were filled with delight and amazement,
 - b. are now filled with anger and murderous rage.
 - c. Why? we wonder.
 - i. All Jesus did was tell two stories about the prophets Elijah and Elisha.
 - (1) stories where a widow gets fed and a leper is healed
 - ii. Moreover they were "jubilee" stories-
 - (1) stories where the world is remade the way God would have it be.
 - iii. What could be wrong with that?
 13. What was wrong was where these stories took place;
 - a. they took place in Sidon and Syria
 - i. over the border
 - ii. on the other side of the fence
 - iii. out there
 - iv. amongst them.
 14. What Jesus was saying to God's people
 - a. was that the blessings of being God's people
 - b. were meant not just for "us" but for "them"
 - i. And indeed according to Jesus God showed,
 - (1) a marked preference for "them".
 - c. And that was why they tried to kill him.
 15. So of course we understand that anger;
 - a. We see it in Lou Dobbs' face when he rages against the mere possibility that illegal immigrants that wash our cars care for our children cut our lawns and work in our factories might enjoy even a part of the rights that WE enjoy
 - b. We hear it in the words of ministers and televangelists who preach against women's rights, civil rights gay rights whatever kind of rights out of fear that they might be seen as equal with them.
 - c. we share it whenever we judge someone and say that they should not be part of us.
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- d. And yet when we listen to Jesus' words and watch what happens to him we see

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that the anger is actually rooted in fear.

i. Fear of them.

16. Now there might be those of you who think I am going too far with this sermon. For there are many
- a. Who are happy with the way things are going in our country,
 - b. Who believe in things like passport controls and strict immigration laws
 - c. Who believe that all we have to do is build the walls a little higher, make the fences a little stronger and we will be safe.
17. And perhaps you are right.
- a. And yet I cannot get around the feeling, that in today's Gospel Jesus offers us another way; a way to end the fear, and to diminish the anger;
 - b. IT is a way which we see every Sunday indeed every time we gather here in this place or in places like it.
 - i. For despite its long checkered history,
 - ii. In which many times she has been more unfaithful to Jesus than faithful,
 - iii. In this she has remained remarkably constant
 - iv. The Church been the one institution where people of every race language and way of life have gathers week after week and day after day, to read and pray and think and eat and drink together.
 - (1) and in that common life grow in mutual understanding, tolerance and maybe just maybe even love.
 - c. Because while borders may exist between the Canadians and us
 - d. And fences might be built between Mexicans and us
 - e. the church believes that Jesus has declared
 - i. that no walls exist between God and us;
 - ii. and thus all peoples are welcome and acceptable to God.
 - f. And whenever we seek to make our churches places that reflect that truth;
 - i. Through the welcome we show to strangers at the door,
 - ii. The care we show to the elderly
 - iii. The charity we show to the poor
 - iv. And the generosity of spirit we show to all.
 - g. And wherever we encounter people working to make our world a place which reflects that truth too,
 - h. no matter who they are,
 - i. we catch a glimpse of the world the way God wants it to be.