

Good News/Bad News

Jeremiah 1: 4-10 **Luke 4:21-32**

The Reverend Ann B. Jahnes
Southport Presbyterian Church
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OK. News flash. It is not always easy to be a Christian. It is not always fun to respond to God's call. You are not always popular when you say what you believe and do the things you believe in. When God puts a claim upon your life, the road may become rough and rocky. You know they say, be careful what you pray for. "God come into my life." When God's Spirit breathes into us, stirs our souls, animates our hearts, opens our eyes, stretches out our hands, changes us, makes us move to a different rhythm, there's some good news and bad news ahead of us.

The good news is: when we are grasped by the Spirit of Christ, life is never the same. There is a deep well-spring of the Spirit that never dries up completely. Sometimes we need to remind ourselves that it is there. But the well is deep and does not fail. We are never alone, for Christ is a true companion. But we have to take time to know him. Read the Word. Talk to him in prayer. Sit in silence and allow him to speak to you, which he may do through the sound and feel of the wind or the flight of birds, or music. Our needs for approval, popularity, success, material things – these change, they have less control over us, and in their place is a quiet confidence, ability to feel joy, a loss of interest in conflict, less anxiety, greater serenity, trust in life. This is good news, isn't it? Aren't these things we desire for ourselves? The good news is, when we are grasped by the Spirit of Christ, life is never the same.

The prophet Jeremiah was touched by God at a young age. He marched to a different drummer. The story says that God touched his lips. At another point of his life, Jeremiah says that he eats the word of God. We can believe that God enters into him, in the same way that we eat a piece of fruit: it enters into our body, it sustains us, it gives us energy, we taste it and it is good, we enjoy it, our life depends upon it. Can it be that we too, can eat the Word of God like that, so that the Spirit of God enters into us, sustains us, gives us energy, so that we can taste that God is good, we enjoy God, and we know and live knowing that we depend upon God. What is that question in the Westminster Shorter Catechism of Faith: "What is the chief end of man? To glorify God and enjoy him forever."

In Jesus, this indwelling of the Word and Spirit of God was complete. And so he told the people of his synagogue, "The Spirit has been fulfilled in me." And the good news is, when we are grasped by the Spirit of Christ, life is never the same. Now, for the bad news: when we are grasped by the Spirit of God, life is never the same.

Life is not the same. Prophets were rejected. Jesus was thrown out of town. Followers of Jesus were misunderstood. Not everyone welcomes us. The story is told of the American Senator who visited Mother Teresa's order, the Little Sisters of Charity, in India, wanting to help her. As he absorbed the enormity of her compassion, he was so impressed and yet, he was also so puzzled. Looking around at all the sick, dying, impoverished people, he wondered aloud, "What good was it really doing in the long run?" He said to her, "With so many, many people in dire need, how can you possibly be successful?" "Well, Senator," she replied, "God does not always call us to be successful; God calls us to always be faithful."

Faithfulness. Hmm. That can be a prophetic virtue in our world today. When we are grasped by the Spirit of Christ, life is never the same. That means we will, at times, have different values from those who do not sense of the presence of God's Spirit. Jesus promises us, "... in me you may have peace. In the world you face persecution. But take courage; I have conquered the world!"

Why not open up your soul and consume the Living Word of God? Life will never be the same. In the Name of God, the Trinity of Love. Amen.