

A reading from the book of the prophet Jeremiah.

Pause – and look up at the assembly

The word of the Lord came to me saying,  
“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you,  
and before you were born I consecrated you;  
I appointed you a prophet to the nations.  
Therefore, gird up your loins;  
stand up and tell them everything that I command you.  
Do not break down before them,  
or I will break you before them.  
And I for my part have made you today a fortified city,  
an iron pillar, and a bronze wall,  
against the whole land –  
against the kings of Judah,  
its princes, its priests, and the people of the land.  
They will fight against you;  
but they shall not prevail against you,  
for I am with you, says the Lord, to deliver you.”



Pause for **THREE** seconds  
then look up at the people  
and say SLOWLY:

The WORD of the LORD.

*Thanks be to God.*

A reading from the first letter of Saint Paul to the Corinthians.

Pause - and look up at the assembly

Brothers and sisters,  
Love never stops caring;  
love acts always in a kind way.  
Love does not act out of jealousy or envy,  
it does not boast or behave arrogantly;  
it does not behave indecently  
or insist on its own way.  
Love does not give way to irritation,  
or brood over wrongs;  
It takes no pleasure in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth.  
Love has space enough to hold and to bear everything and everyone  
it believes all things,  
hopes all things,  
and endures whatever comes.  
Love does not come to an end.  
But as for prophecies, they will come to an end;  
as for tongues, they will cease;  
as for knowledge, it will come to an end.  
For we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part;  
but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end.  
When I was a child, I spoke like a child,  
I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child;  
when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways.

prophecies = **PROF**-fess-sees

prophesy = **PROF**-fess-**SIGH**

For 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, even as I have been fully known.  
Now faith, hope, and love abide, these three;  
and the greatest of these is love.

Pause for **THREE** seconds  
then look up at the people  
and say SLOWLY:



The WORD of the LORD.

*Thanks be to God.*

## GOSPEL READING – C 04

The Lord be with you.

*And also with your spirit.*

A reading from the holy gospel according to Luke.

*Glory to you, O Lord.*

Jesus, filled with the power of the Spirit,  
came to Nazareth where he had been brought up.  
He went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, as was his custom,  
and read from the prophet Isaiah.  
The eyes of all were fixed on him.  
Then he began to say to them.  
“Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”  
All spoke well of him  
and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth.  
They said, “Is not this Joseph’s son?”  
Jesus said to them,  
“Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb,  
‘Doctor, cure yourself!’  
And you will say, ‘Do here also in your hometown  
the things that we have heard you did at Capernaum.’”  
And he said, “Truly I tell you,  
no prophet is accepted in his hometown.  
But the truth is,  
there were many widows in Israel in the time of Elijah,  
when the heaven was shut up three years and six months,  
and there was a severe famine over all the land;  
  
yet Elijah was sent to none of them  
except to a widow at Zarephath in Sidon.  
There were also many lepers in Israel  
in the time of the prophet Elisha,  
and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian.”  
When they heard this,  
all in the synagogue were filled with rage.  
They got up, drove Jesus out of the town,  
and led him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built,  
so that they might hurl him off the cliff.  
But he passed through the midst of them and went on his way.



The GOSPEL of the LORD.

*Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.*

## SCRIPTURE IN DEPTH

### Reading I: Jeremiah 1:4-5, 17-19

Today's Old Testament reading consists of the first and last portions of the account of Jeremiah's call to be a prophet. The call, properly speaking, covers verses 4-10, 17-19, and it would have been more consistent with the structure of the text to divide the material thus, omitting only the two visions that interrupt the narrative of the call (vv. 11-16).

The call is related in the form of a dialogue between YHWH and the prophet. Jeremiah was predestined from the womb to be a prophet—a characteristically biblical emphasis on the initiative of YHWH in Israel's salvation history.

"Consecrated" refers to the separation of the prophet for a distinctive role in that history. Jeremiah's call played an important role in Paul's understanding of his apostolic call (Gal 1:15).

The liturgical selection today, however, treats Jeremiah's call as a type of Jesus' messianic call, for this passage was chosen to match the second half of the sermon in the synagogue at Nazareth.

Jeremiah's mission is not merely to Israel but to "the nations." Since the time of Amos, the prophets had a strong sense of God as the sovereign Lord of all history, not just that of his people. This lordship was expressed more in his judgments than in his acts of mercy.

The caption, "I have appointed you as prophet to the nations," calls special attention to this universality of Jeremiah's mission because of the Epiphany season and also because of the gospel reading, which invokes the stories of Elijah and Elisha as types of Christ's universal ministry.

In these two types, however, the emphasis is on the salvation of YHWH reaching out beyond Israel rather than on his judgment.

In the second paragraph of our reading, Jeremiah is warned of the opposition he will incur in Israel, which again links this reading with Jesus' rejection at Nazareth. There is a consistency both in God's dealings with his people and in his people's reaction to his word, a consistency that runs through both the Old Testament and the New.

### Responsorial Psalm: 71:1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 15-17

This psalm is an individual lament, sung by an aged person in a time of sickness (third stanza). The afflicted one flees to God and prays for deliverance (first and second stanzas), and concludes with a vow to praise God henceforth (presumably in thanksgiving for delivery from sickness).

This hymn would be suitable for Christian devotion at any time, for the Christian's fundamental sickness is sin, and the delivery is forgiveness through the atoning work of Christ.

However, the reason for its choice today seems to be that Jeremiah frequently fled to God for refuge in face of the hostility of the kings, princes, priests, and people of Judah (First Reading).

### **Reading II: 1 Corinthians 13:4-13 (short form)**

Paul's hymn to charity falls into four parts: (1) verses 1-3; (2) verses 4-7; (3) verses 8-12; (4) verse 13: conclusion. The shorter reading consists of the second and third parts plus the conclusion. The longer reading reproduces the whole hymn plus 12:31, which indicates its context in the letter, namely, Paul's discussion of the charismata.

The first and third parts refer to the charismata; the second part is more abstract and general in its characterization of agape. The hymn's place in the letter is problematical. Verse 14:1 would follow directly upon 12:31a.

Whereas 12:31b in the RSV [= 13:1 in the NAB] promises one "more excellent way," the hymn gives us the three virtues of faith, hope, and love, although love is acknowledged to be the greatest.

These problems have led some to suppose that the hymn is a post-Pauline interpolation, but the first and third parts are too specifically related to the context, the discussion of the charismata, for that.

Striking, too, is the lack of any specific Christological reference in the hymn. But the triad of faith, hope, and love belongs to Christian tradition and occurs elsewhere in the Pauline letters, especially in the opening thanksgivings. Otherwise the hymn is akin in style to hymns in praise of wisdom and other virtues found in Hellenistic Jewish wisdom literature.

It might be suggested that the second part of the hymn was preformed in Hellenistic Jewish Christianity or even in Hellenistic Judaism, and that Paul himself has adapted it to the context by adding the first and third parts.

Note the difference of style: the first and third parts are written in an "I" style. This is not Paul's own ego speaking but refers to anyone or everyone. This use of the "I" style is characteristic of Hellenistic rhetoric (cf. Rom 7:7-25).

If the central paragraph originally stood on its own, before Paul used it here, and was modeled on Hellenistic Jewish material, we can see why agape is treated simply as a human virtue without any reference to Christology, and why there is no clarification about its object—whether it is God's love for human beings or their love for God or for others.

It is simply the description of an abstract virtue, like the praise of wisdom in the wisdom literature.

### Gospel: Luke 4:21-30

As we have already noted, this is the second part of the sermon in the synagogue at Nazareth. The first part, read last Sunday, consisted of the text of the sermon (Is 61) and the brief declaration in verse 21, with which today's reading also opens.

The synagogue congregation expresses its astonishment at Jesus' teaching and is perplexed because it knows his human origins. This material is similar to Mark 6, though the reference to Jesus' family is different, recalling John 7:41-42 and therefore suggesting a second source.

Then comes the proverb "Physician, heal thyself" (not found elsewhere in the Synoptics) and the awkward reference to works already done in Capernaum—awkward because in Luke's Gospel Jesus has not yet worked there. This would suit the Marcan context better, but the reference to Capernaum is absent from Mark.

Therefore the proverb and the reference to Capernaum must be a fragment of a non-Marcan version of the rejection that Luke has inserted here. Then comes the saying from Mark about the prophet's not being honored in his own country.

After this we have more material peculiar to Luke, namely, the references to the miracles performed for Gentiles by Elijah and Elisha. The style and vocabulary of this section are definitely Lucan, as A. R. C. Leaney notes in his commentary on Luke. The interest in turning to the Gentiles after the rejection by Israel is also a characteristic Lucan theme.

It is impossible to say for certain whether the whole of this section of the sermon is Lucan composition (Leaney leaves the question open). There is, of course, the possibility that the examples of Elijah and Elisha had already been used in Christian preaching before Luke, and that he has worked these traditional features into his composition, just as he formed the kerygmatic speeches in Acts out of earlier Christological formulas and Old Testament testimonia.

The story closes with a hostile attempt on Jesus' life. At first sight this looks like a Lucan expansion of Mark's statement (6:3) that the people of Nazareth were offended at Jesus because of his teaching.

But the miraculous escape from a hostile crowd is paralleled in Jn 10:39, so it is hardly likely to be a Lucan creation. It seems, therefore, that Luke has a special source containing a version of the Nazareth episode differing from Mark's.

This alternative tradition will include: (1) the citation of Is 61; (2) the proverb about the physician and the reference to earlier works in Capernaum; (3) the attempt to stone Je-

sus. Luke will then have combined this narrative with Mark's, expanding it by his own composition and embodying the references to Elijah and Elisha.

The effect of this Lucan redaction is to make the story programmatic to his two-volume work. Luke will repeatedly stress the fact that because of Israel's rejection of the Messiah, the Gospel goes forth to the Gentile world.

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