

The power of the word

We spoke of this last week

Our Gospel today shows its effect in our lives

This was brought out for me in a show I once saw

A preacher had come into a town

He was causing some discontent his preaching

One characters had a difficult time with what this man was saying

Because the words were unsettling

And it was not so much what was being said

But who was saying these things

The preacher had a checkered past

As did the other character

And the words were a special challenge because of this

In an almost throwaway line, the man asks the preacher

Why do you conflict me against myself?

I think this is happening in our Gospel

Isn't this the son of Joseph?

The son of a carpenter?

Where did he get this?

Why do you conflict me against myself?

This is the power of the Word

We know our past

We know our sins

And we get caught up in them

We hear the Word

And rather than allowing it to bring us into conversion

Rather than allowing it to point out the path we should take

Rather than seeing what can be

We fall into Satan's trap

We look into the past

We see what was

And we often find ourselves conflicted against ourselves

The power of the word

Jeremiah was conflicted

The word of the LORD came to me, saying:

Before I formed you in the womb I knew you,

before you were born I dedicated you,

a prophet to the nations I appointed you.

If we read the passages before and after this

We see Jeremiah doesn't want this call to be a prophet

He protests

Lord, look at me

I am too young, not enough experience

They will not listen

He comes up with excuses

God insists

Excuses are powerless

God doesn't promise an easy time

Kings and princes; priests and people will fight against you

But you will never be alone to twist in the wind

And Jeremiah relents

He goes to the people

He speaks the truth

To kings and to paupers

And he is rejected

Telling the people what they already knew

He sets them at war with themselves

We see the same thing in our Gospel

Jesus reads this passage from Isaiah

He claims it as his own

He doesn't tell them anything new

He doesn't set them against one another

He speaks the truth to them

He sets them against themselves

They don't like it any more than we do today

They rise up and grab Jesus

Taking him out of their town

They go to the edge of a precipice

Intending to throw him off

But he turns and walks away through their midst

Being a prophet is not an easy call

But it is our call

It is an aspect of our baptism

So what is a prophet?

It is not being a fortuneteller

It is not a predictor of future events

A prophet is one who speaks for another

As baptized Christians

It is one who speaks for God

One who speaks the truth

If we follow this call, we will find it daunting at times

As Jeremiah did

As Jesus did

Because the power of the word

Will conflict us against ourselves

And the prophet is not immune to this

Jesus, who is the way, the truth and the life

He is the only one never in conflict with himself

Original sin affects the rest of us

Do we have the courage to be a prophet?

Speak God's word to others

Speak the truth to others

Even when we ourselves may have come up so short in our own past?

Parents to speak the truth to a child

It is so easy to make excuses rather than face the truth of our behaviors

Teachers sometimes have to give a bad grade

Employers sometimes have to challenge their employees

A person may have to challenge their boss or co-workers

Friends may have to challenge their friends

When the actions of others continue

We may even have to walk away from a job or a friend

Or even from family

The power of the word

It conflicts us against ourselves

So when we are called to speak the truth into the life of another

When we are called to speak the truth into our own life

How do we go about this?

We learn from St Paul

This reading to the Corinthians is read at many weddings today

But it is more than a lesson on human love

Paul is writing to a group of people who are struggling

This is a continuation of last week's reading

Where he speaks of being a part of a body

They had been fighting over power and prestige

Who were the teachers and what is their place in the church?

Things that continue in so many ways in our lives today

So he calls them out

Are all prophets?

Are all teachers?

Are all administrators?

We can only fulfill our calling when we are together

No one individual has every gift

And no one has the entirety of any one gift

We need each other's gifts

We need each other's support

St Paul tells us it is love that is the common denominator

Only in love can we come together to be the body of Christ

To stand together against the excesses of society

To stand together against the temptations of Satan

The power of the Word

To speak the truth in love

To be a beacon of light to a darkened world

To be a prophet

Not only for a select few

But for all the baptized

To live a sacrificial love

The love between spouses

The love of a parent for a child

The love of a patriot for their country

The love of Christ for his Church

We do not use it as a hammer, but as an invitation

In lives of service for another

Lives of service for The Other

St Thomas Aquinas tells us this love consists of one thing

Seeking the good of another for their sake

**And Theresa of Liseaux tells us that when we don't find that love
around us**

We are called to put it there

Even when it might set us against ourselves

To build his kingdom here

And in eternity