The Living Word!
Luke 4:21-30
Jeremiah 1:4-10

"And all spoke well of him, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth… And he said to them, 'Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb, 'Physician, heal yourself…"(Luke 4:22,23) Here we find the people of Nazareth, Jesus' hometown folks, impressed by the words he had spoken, initially at least. Jesus is aware that they are more **impressed by the words that he has spoken than the message** he has delivered – freedom for those oppressed and captive, **and Good News for the poor. Jesus came** proclaiming a message of equality, justice, and hope. As long as the words he spoke required nothing of those listening they were fine with the **eloquence of them. It was when the people** of Nazareth realized Jesus' message **would require them to accept him and change** their lives and live according to the principles of their faith that they became enraged, drug Jesus to the edge of town and attempted to caste him over a cliff, but **we know that Jesus was able to escape**. These were the religious people who knew the words of their faith, yet failed to see the Living Word, Jesus, standing before them. They lacked a relationship with the Living Word. For them the **Good News of the gospel was not so good. Something** was going to be required of them. **Just as something is required of us. "**The Good News isn't going to be "good" for everybody, at least not those who **want to hold onto excessive wealth, and power and place."**[1]

The Good News found in the life and message of Jesus continues to threaten some and it can **at times challenge the most devout person of faith. To accept** the Good News of our Christian faith is to accept Jesus as our Savior while accepting the responsibility of living our lives as he **calls us to. We are to accept the Living Word. "In the beginning was the Word,** and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God; all

[1] Kate Huey. UCC SAMUEL; Fourth Sunday after Epiphany Lectionary Citations. January 31, 2010

things were made through him, and without him was not anything made. In him **was life, and the life was the light of [humankind.]" (John 1: 1-4**) We know that sadly, there are those who can quote the words of the Bible and yet continue to carry **Jesus to a cliff to toss him over. Their message and** their lives are hollow. They are like the people who were impressed by Jesus words, but who chose to not accept the transformation Jesus was asking of them. We are called to not just hear the Good News of love, liberation, and salvation, but to allow **the word of God, in Jesus, to transform our lives and** thereby transforming the world we live in.

We are called to be like our brother Jeremiah, "Then the Lord reached out his hand and touched my mouth and said to me, 'Now, I have put my words in your mouth. See, today I appoint you over nations and kingdoms to uproot and **tear down, to destroy and overthrow, to build and to plant."** (Jer. 4: 9, 10) Jeremiah was to destroy and to build up not through violence or force, but by the words given him by God. **The words given to us. He** was to act upon the words God placed in his mouth, in his heart and upon his life. **His faith required that God's words not remain silent**, but that they be proclaimed and lived out such that they brought justice, destroyed systems **of haves and have-nots, and helped the land** to once again be fertile and life giving.

My sisters and brothers of Peace we cannot be so impressed by the words of the Bible that they remain silent on the pages of the book**. Or that we speak them out of our hollowness.** We must accept the Living Word, Jesus Christ, into our hearts and lives such that we know both the **joy and struggle of what it means to be** children of God. To be the children of God "you cannot have a viable, peaceable, urban community when deep poverty must live alongside huge wealth, when high privilege is visible alongside **endless disadvantage in health and housing and** education. [You cannot continue to destroy God's creation such that soil is

depleted, toxic waste continues to be dumped destroying **our natural habitat, nor can human beings continue** to invade natural habitats **destroying the vegetation and wildlife for** selfish gain, if we are going to be called a child of God.] You can have **some inequities, but the inequities must be** curbed by a practice of neighborliness that knows every day those rich and poor, haves and have-nots, all of creation - are in it together…. We are all [humankind and the rest of creation] **in the same boat – lost without God."**[2]

St Francis of Assisi said this, "**Preach the gospel at all times – if necessary, use words." So my sisters and brothers of Peace** let us preach the gospel such that the Living Word shines through our lives and our actions. Our message should **be like our brother's Jesus and Jeremiah**. We are to destroy systems which foster the haves and have-nots, systems of division which say that some of our lives are more valuable than others, and systems which allow our natural resources to be **destroyed as a consequence of avarice** and greed. Let us preach the gospel from the richness of our relationship with Jesus and not as hollow believers who only know the words but have no **relationship with the Living Word. Amen**

Today, Mark and Henry Tolstedt are going to share with us from their experiences while in Australia. In **their words let us see what God is calling the people of Australia** and the rest of us to in caring for God's creation and setting a table that is welcoming to all people.

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[2] Ibid