

# ST. JOHN'S AT DIOCESAN CENTER IGLESIA EPISCOPAL DE SAN JUAN

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## REVEALING HEARTS

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Text of a Sermon preached the Fourth Sunday after Epiphany

January 30, 2022

JEREMIAH 1:4-10 | PSALM 71:1-6  
I CORINTHIANS 13:1-12 | LUKE 4:21-30

There you are. In the synagogue at Nazareth. Jesus, Joseph and Mary's son, had been ahead of you in class. You had lost track of him since he had moved to Capernaum, the big town around the lake. You had started hearing about him hanging out with John the Baptist. Something about miracles. There had always been something commanding about him, something mysterious, something attractive.

But as he is sitting down, after having read from the scroll of Isaiah about the great dream of the Jubilee, the year of the Lord's favor, you do not know what to think. Really? That's a stretch. The last we compared notes, our debts were nowhere near being forgiven, and the foreign powers and greedy politicians who owned and traded our ancestral lands were not about to step aside and make us whole, even the playing field, restore the opportunity of our birthright.

And someone over in the corner said aloud words that had crossed your mind: "Is this not Joseph's son?" You couldn't quite catch the tone. Was it said warmly or coldly, in admiration or incredulity. Or somewhere in between? Then you heard others say it. "Is this not Joseph's son?" Each with a different accent, a different take.

There was no legitimate king in Israel. There were plenty of priests and a class of people who kept the temple going since Herod had rebuilt it in great splendor with the help of his Roman overlords. But where were the true teachers in Israel, the scribe and the pharisee, that could really help people understand the mind and heart of God? Rabbis, there were plenty of. But where were the prophets? Where were those called to listen to God, and who would then faithfully report what they had heard?

Israel's life was ordered through the offices of the king, the priest, and the prophet. But it was the role of the prophet that was the most mysterious. They emerged when Israel decided it wanted a king to rule over it. Samuel, Nathan, Elijah, and Elisha all showed up to make sure the kings in Israel heard the truth. From their lives we get the great definition of the prophet's role. The prophet speaks truth to power.

The prophet speaks first to let people know what is coming. The prophet does not so much predict as foretell. If we keep on this path, this is what will happen. The prophet says. I see it. It is on the horizon.

Yet the other aspect of what the prophet does is what is happening in the synagogue in Nazareth, on that day when Jesus read from the scroll and then sat down, not so much to explain it, as to remind everyone that God had said those words, had made those promises. The prophet speaks, often not seeing anything, knowing only that God has said it. And it is true, come what may.

Thus the prophet is the revealer of hearts. The prophet reads minds, because hearts, intentions, desires, are written on faces, in the way the body tenses and shifts, in the air of the necessity of the moment.

You are sitting there. Hearing the crowd murmur. Feeling it shift. And then Jesus says something quite astounding. “Surely you will say to me: physician heal yourself.” First of all, what does that mean? It is the role of the physician to heal others. Only under special circumstances would the physician be asked to heal themselves.

But Jesus, if you really are something special, if you really can set the captives free and give sight to the blind and restore our fortunes, then why don't you do it? Right now. What is it that we don't see?

Maybe if Jesus had not said anything else, he could have walked out of the synagogue and gone on to the big city and taken his at there. But he just had to start a fight. So maybe we all know each other too well. We know who is generous and who is cruel. Who is wise and who is foolish. But why would you start talking about all the ways we have been unfaithful? Why would you bring up the fact that the prophets had more impact, on foreigners and terrible sinners? Why do there?

It is hard to know exactly why Jesus said what he said. But he certainly revealed many hearts and exposed a history of disbelief, loss of faith, and disobedience, that would take much more to heal than a quick laying on of hands.

As the crowd drove Jesus to the cliff and thought they would enact God's will by throwing him over, they soon realized that a prophet is a prophet. A prophet can only speak the truth, come what may. They couldn't touch him. He turned and walked right through us.

And as we watch him walk away, we might realize as well, that Jesus was the prophet that the prophet Moses spoke about, the prophet that would be greater than he, who walked through the desert and the Red sea to set free.

And thanks to the word we also received today, we learn that prophecy will cease, and that all we need is that which bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love.

Arms stretched out on the cross for the whole world. Love itself.

Jesus of Nazareth. Joseph's son. Prophet, priest and king. Messiah.  
Lover of all souls. Revealer of all our hearts. Amen.