

Sermon Epiphany 4C

After Jesus has read from the Prophet Isaiah about the anointed one coming to proclaim freedom to captives and those who are oppressed he says that this has been fulfilled in the hearing of those present. Those present in Jesus' former hometown of Nazareth have heard of what Jesus has done in other places. They want to witness his miracles, too, but that does not happen. I could see Jesus even using the lyrics by Mick Jagger and Keith Richards, you can't always get what you want, but you just might find you get what you need. I suppose that this does raise the question, what do we need. The answer comes from St. Paul and it is to the lyrics of Paul McCartney and John Lennon, all you need is love.

St. Paul's section of his first letter to the church in Corinth contains this beautiful discourse on love. It is often read at weddings, but has far greater applicability. It also might be a bit unsettling to look at some of what is said here, especially if one is a fundamentalist or wants to exclude certain people. Paul says that one can have all the faith in the world, but it is of no value without love. He also says that all prophecies and all knowledge will come to an end, but love never ends. I think that Paul is speaking about the fact that only love is permanent. We tend to believe this to be true in our denomination. Over time our understandings have changed. I believe that Paul is saying, by saying that all prophecies will end and all knowledge will come to an end, is that we will move forward in our knowledge. It is a pretty amazing thing for Paul to be saying. Of course we do know this to be true. In his time knowledge was limited pretty much to personal experience. An example is that the earth seemed flat and the sun and planets seemed to be rotating around the earth. As to the prophecies he was probably noting how things had changed with Jesus. For us we say that all other scripture should be seen through the lens of the Gospel. That even means that what Jesus teaches can negate what is in other scripture.

Paul is telling us that scripture that is at odds with acting out of love are now outmoded as only love is infinite. I realize that forms of the faith that proclaim that there are those whom we should exclude and they use Old Testament scripture to justify their fear and hatred. Paul gives us the truly

Christian response to such a misunderstanding when he says that only love endures. Only love is the true expression of the faith.

AMEN