

Prophet on the Edge

Luke 4:21-30

Jesus just couldn't stop with a feel-good message for the friends and relatives gathered to hear him teach in his hometown synagogue.

That day, among those who had watched him grow up, Jesus pushed the God envelope, informing the congregation that the miracles they heard him performed in Capernaum were not happening anytime soon in Nazareth.

What? Why not? Explain to us Jesus why you view the rejected, the afflicted and the outsider more worthy of healing than your own people? The mood quickly changes. The crowd goes from being impressed to being enraged.

It was one thing to hear about the blind receiving sight and the prisoners being set free, as Jesus' read for them from the scroll. Those words had been spoken before by other teachers. But those teachers let the words remain safely on the parchment. Jesus, though, expounds on the power and impact of God's word, making them leap with new life off the scroll and into the crowd.

Those in the synagogue should have seen it coming. Jesus did begin his teaching telling them that the Spirit of the Lord was upon him — and that Spirit does not sugarcoat anything.

Jesus knew that there was no such thing of a hometown advantage when it came to preaching God's truth. He wasn't surprised by the scoffer whispering loudly from the back of the room the derogatory comment, "Isn't this Joseph's son?"

He wasn't surprised either when the crowd got violent, kicking him out of the synagogue and chasing him to a cliff on the edge of town.

He wasn't surprised, and neither should we be.

The adage that truth is hard to hear is true because truth never travels alone. Truth is always accompanied with change, and change is always greeted by yet another companion — resistance.

Jesus, our prophet on the edge — literally on the edge of a cliff and figuratively on the edge of making us all a bit uncomfortable — knew that while it was easier to tell people what they wanted to hear, half-truths and blatant lies wouldn't further God's vision of a peaceable kingdom. What would create a beloved community, where insiders and outsiders were one, was truth, which always asks for much-needed change.

Jesus is in our hometown this day. Will we listen with open ears and hearts to him? Or will we chase him away because we just aren't ready for the changes that the truth will ask of us?

Patient and Loving God, every time we pray "thy kingdom come" we realize that we do not fully grasp what that kingdom is. Your ways differ from ours. Help us to listen to your Holy Voice and, in the listening may we find the courage to hear truths that will lead to changing this world for the better. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.



St. John’s United Church of Christ

P.O. Box 794, 401 N Main Street, Belvidere, IL 61008

Sunday Christian Education 9am Worship 10:30
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WELCOME VISITORS! Thank you for coming! Please sign a pew card to place in the offering plate.

WORSHIP: When reading this bulletin Leader Speaks Plain Font, **Everyone Speak Bold Font**
 Everyone is invited to join us in Communion.

Nursery: There is no nursery attendant today so everyone is able to participate in Communion. Kids are welcome to quietly play in the back of the sanctuary or have their adult join them in the nursery.

You Are Not Alone

The following support groups meet regularly at St. John’s

- The Belvidere Group (AA) meets at everyday at 7pm. Women’s Group meets Mondays 5:30pm
- T.O.P.S. Mondays 11am



Delicious Fundraiser



Amazon List



T-Shirts

Announcements

- ✚ **Soup or Bowl and Scout Sunday** February 9th
- ✚ **St. John’s Annual Meeting** February 16th
- ✚ **Spring Eggstravaganza** Saturday, March 22nd 11am-2pm. Have any potential vendors contact Pastor Muriel
- ✚ **Community Meal** every third Wednesday of the month from 5p-6p!
- ✚ **Every 3rd Sunday of the month**, St. John’s leads services at **Heritage Woods** at 3 pm. Join after their service for time to socialize with the residents and meet some great people.
- ✚ **Blessing Box** No canned foods or anything that may contain water, in this cold weather. Containers can freeze and explode or worse freeze and thaw without anyone knowing and go bad. These can make people sick. **Cans will be thrown away.** Let’s work together to make sure only safe food goes to our neighbors. If you want to make canned donations, you can bring things **INSIDE** the church and we will get them to Food pantries or people in need.
- ✚ **Paper Angel Closet** needs toilet paper, paper towels, Kleenex, toothpaste, bleach, shampoo, and dish soap.
- ✚ **Menards Ministry:** If you have unused Menards rebates, or even receipts. We use these rebates for projects around the church.
- ✚ **Open Door Fundraiser:** We are still collecting money to upgrade our parking lot doors. Our goal is to collect enough money to automate the doors and make it a double entry to hold the temperature in the office area.

**Praise God, above ye heavenly host.
Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Amen.**

Prayer of Dedication

Giver of Good Gifts, may the gifts we give reflect your abundance and generosity. Use our time, talent, and treasure to serve our faith community and the world. May each offering be a seed that will grow, spread, and perfume the atmosphere with faith, hope, and love. Amen



[General Giving](#)

Hymn "This Little Light of Mine"

This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine. This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine. This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine, let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.

This love I have, I'm gonna let it shine. This love I have, I'm gonna let it shine. This love I have, I'm gonna let it shine, let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.

This hope I have, I'm gonna let it shine. This hope I have, I'm gonna let it shine. This hope I have, I'm gonna let it shine, let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.

Benediction

Postlude

Through the Midst: Service Prayers for the Fourth Sunday after Epiphany was written by the Rev. Dr. Cheryl A. Lindsay, Minister for Worship and Theology for the United Church of Christ.

Prelude

Announcements

Choral Introit "Surely the Presence"
**Surely the presence of the Lord is in this place,
I can feel His mighty power and His grace.
I can hear the brush of angel's wings
I see glory on each face;
Surely the presence of the Lord is in this place.**

Responsive Welcome Statement

At St. John's United Church of Christ, we are Living Outwardly & Valuing Everyone!

We live and work amid God's love!

In that spirit, we extend love to all who come into our midst, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, race, nationality, skin color, culture, differing abilities, age or political affiliations, to participate fully in all aspects of church.

Our ministry is to bring the Good News of Christ's love to all.

We work in God's name to tear down walls and build community,

to walk with each other through all of life's circumstances,

to provide for those in need,

to offer comfort to the hurting and the sick,

and to uplift the brokenhearted.

Where we fail, we ask for God's forgiveness.

May the Holy Spirit and our siblings continue to challenge us to do better.

No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here!

Call to Worship (Inspired by Psalm 71)

In the Holy One, we take refuge; let us never be put to shame. Our praise is continually of you.

In your righteousness deliver us and hear our

cries for justice and peace.

In the Holy One, we draw strength; let us never be put to shame. Our praise is continually of you.

Be a rock of refuge for the vulnerable, a strong fortress to save creation, for you are our rock and fortress.

In the Holy One, we receive courage; let us never be put to shame. Our praise is continually of you.

Rescue us, O my God, from the hand of the wicked, from the grasp of the unjust and cruel, for you, Holy One, are our hope and trust.

Invocation

Emmanuel, we welcome you in our midst. You amaze and inspire, challenge and convict, comfort and fortify. May we be open and receptive to your voice and presence among us. Let your words encourage us to be prophetic, passionate, and public in our ministry as we praise and honor your name. Amen.

Hymn #4 "Joyful, Joyful" Verse 1-3

Apostles Creed, an alternate version #882

Children's Time "Good and Happy"

Pastoral Prayer – The Lord's Prayer

Hymn #531 "God, Speak to Me"

Prayer for Transformation and New Life

God Who Knows Us, we pray that you form and shape us anew. Remind us who we are and draw us back to you. Transform us in love, correct us with compassion, and lead us with clarity into the paths of righteousness, truth, and peace. Forgive us for the ways that we reject your presence, your guidance, and your will. Redeem and restore us as your beloved creation and active

**citizens of your kindom. In Jesus, we pray.
Amen.**

Words of Grace

Beloved, love never ends. You reflect the goodness, creative work, and imagination of God. The Holy One knows you well and calls you good. Receive the grace of God to live a life that ever transforms and renews through the power of God's abiding, constant, and tangible love.

Gloria Patri

**Glory be to the Father, and to the Son
and to the Holy Ghost,
as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall
be,
world without end. Amen.**

Scripture Luke 4:16-30

Sermon "Only the Good News"

Service of Communion

Blessing and Sharing the Elements

*All are invited to participate in this Holy symbol of Communion.
You are invited to eat the as a sign of your own personal faith
and hold the cup to drink together as a sign of our communion
faith.*

Prayer of Thanksgiving

Invitation to Generosity

Moment for Mission Over Night Cafe

Musical Offering

Doxology

**Praise God, through whom all blessings flow,
Praise God, all creatures here below,**