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Fourth Sunday, Feb 3, 2019

Several weeks ago, we moved from Christmas season into ordinary time with the baptism of Jesus. Then our focus switched to Jesus' early public ministry, first with John's story about the wedding feast at Cana, then last week with Luke's account of Jesus at home in Nazareth. Luke speaks of Jesus' powerful preaching and the year of the Lord's favor.

But almost immediately the scene turns sour as his own people drive Jesus out of town. That part of this early scene in Nazareth is what we hear today.

The first reading, from Jeremiah, introduces this theme of conflict and rejection. God consoles Jeremiah, supporting him in his challenging role as prophet. Indeed, Jeremiah would eventually get dumped into a dry cistern and later led into exile.

In between these two readings of conflict we hear Paul's celebration of love. What a contrast! Let's listen to God's word.

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While the first part of Luke's account of Jesus' keynote address may have consoled us last week, this more sobering part also speaks to us. As disciples of Jesus we too encounter conflict and rejection. We live in a culture and world marked by violence of all kinds, by leaders who lie and ignore the common good, by individualism and consumerism (a 30 second ad in tonight's Super Bowl costs more than five times Bellarmine's yearly budget).

Like Jeremiah, we too have been called to speak and act against the evils of our world, to speak and act for peace and the flourishing of all life. How profoundly, then, do we need to hear God's words to Jeremiah, words of presence and support, care and hope.

Sandwiched between the conflict and rejection of Jeremiah and Jesus we hear Paul's hymn to love, words to be proclaimed and pondered not just at weddings but today and every day, words of wisdom to show us the way. Patience. Kindness. Not rude. Not brooding over injury. Rejoicing with the truth. Hoping all things.

In the midst of the conflict in your life, how will you love?