



## Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany

30 January 2021

The Episcopal Church of the Good Shepherd in Athens, Ohio--seeking to know and serve Christ in loving service to the campus, the community, and the world.

### The Lessons

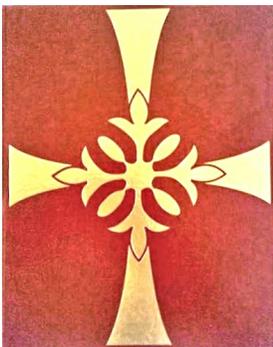
**Lessons** for the Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany: Jeremiah 1: 4-10; Psalm 71-1-6; I Corinthians 13: 1-13; Luke 4: 21:30.

<https://www.lectionarypage.net>

### The Collect

Almighty and everlasting God, you govern all things both in heaven and on earth: Mercifully hear the supplications of your people, and in our time grant us your peace; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

### The Gospel



#### Luke 4:21-30

**J**esus, began to speak in the synagogue at Nazareth: "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth. They said, "Is not this Joseph's son?" He said to them, "Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb, 'Doctor, cure yourself!' And you will say, 'Do here also in your hometown the things that we have heard you did at Capernaum.'" And he said, "Truly I tell you, no prophet is accepted in the prophet's hometown. But the truth is, there were many widows in Israel in the time of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, and there was a severe famine over all the land; yet Elijah was sent to none of them except to a widow at

Zarephath in Sidon. There were also many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian." When they heard this, all in the synagogue were filled with rage. They got up, drove him out of the town, and led him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they might hurl him off the cliff. But he passed through the midst of them and went on his way.

## The Sermon

### A Disappointed Hometown

"The easy part is speaking truth to power. The hard part is speaking truth to your community." Although those sentences were spoken by the publisher of a local newspaper in the small midwestern town of Benson, Minnesota and were featured in an Associated Press article this week, perhaps Jesus could relate to them in today's Gospel reading.

Today's reading picks up where we left off last week. So, if you weren't here, or if you have forgotten, after he was baptized and after he successfully overcame temptation in the wilderness, the Holy Spirit was with Jesus, as he arrived at his hometown of Nazareth. There he went to the synagogue and was given the honor of reading from the scroll of Isaiah. He picked a section that spoke of the Messiah as God's embodiment of love through healing, liberation from oppression, and forgiveness of sins. Then he sat down to preach, saying, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." That sentence is both where we left off last Sunday and start today.

Notice that at first Jesus' hometown positively received the reading and his short sermon. It sounds like they might have been proud and perhaps even impressed with the gracious way he spoke or that he spoke of God's grace. Either way, Jesus was well received back in his hometown. Until he obviously wasn't. Until something changed or went wrong. The hometown crowd went from proud to raging after Jesus spoke of two of the great prophets of history who showed God's grace to people considered foreign: a widow from another place who miraculously during a famine was able to keep making honey cakes for her, her child, and Elijah for years when she only had enough ingredients for one day. When her son was ill to the point of death, Elijah restored him to wellness. The prophet Elisha healed the leader of the enemy's army of the disease leprosy. These might sound like pretty harmless stories. To us, they could even sound inspiring and hopeful. So, we might wonder, why did the people in Jesus' hometown get so upset as to threaten violence after Jesus mentioned them?

There are, of course several interpretations. One of which unfortunately has led to anti-Semitic reactions, and that is really too bad because the Gospels are not intended to make us hate anyone person or group of people or blame them for our discomfort. Instead of pointing fingers and finding fault, the Gospel is intended to reveal God incarnate, God manifest in Jesus. This revelation is intended to be just as healing, liberating, and bring about forgiveness as Jesus himself, not cause more suffering.

The reaction of the people in Jesus' hometown could stem from disappointment that Jesus caused when he said he was not going to bring attention to his hometown. We need to remember who Jesus was speaking to. It was the not only the *place* where

he grew up. These were most likely the *people: the neighbors* who watched him grow up. The ones who scolded him for running too fast, or wiped his nose when it was runny, or helped him up if he tripped and fell when he was a little boy. These were the people who taught him, who watched him grow and learn the work of his family. Notice they referred to him by his family. Anyone who grew up in a small town can relate to that. For many years of my life, I was recognized by the people in my hometown – the teachers, farmers, people who worked at the post office, stores, restaurants, and car dealerships, even my church, as “Bill Woolsey’s daughter”. There is nothing wrong with that, and I am proud of my father and to be a member of my family. However, my hometown community had a hard time imagining I could be anything other than the local plumber’s daughter, even after graduating from college and then managing a local independent children’s bookstore for eight years. It wasn’t until I left for seminary and then was ordained a priest that the same people who watched me grow up and then mature could call me by my name instead of my father’s name. And they are disappointed I went so far away after I was ordained. They had an expectation that I would stay at least in the area if not in town so they could continue to watch me grow, maybe even find a way I could give back to the community that raised me.

I wonder if the good folks at Nazareth were similar to the good folks of Waupaca? They certainly aren’t that different from the good folks here in Athens County who are eager for this sermon to be over so we can get the service over, so we can all get home, get the annual meeting over with so we can watch our own local hero Joe Burrow fulfill his dream of playing professional football and lead the Cincinnati Bengals to victory over the Kansas City Chiefs, and go on to take his team to the Super Bowl. That is the hope.

This community watched Joe, who lived in The Plains, grow up and cheered him on when he played football in Athens High School. This community was pleased and proud when he signed on to play for the Bengals, because he could have played for any number of professional football teams, but he chose to stay close to home. The icing on the cake, however, was when he made his now famous speech to the nation about achieving his dream of playing professional football and drew attention to our county and the terrible poverty and food insecurity this county suffers. As a result of his speech, millions of dollars poured in from all over the United States to our local food pantry. Our parish representative, the Rev. Katharin Foster, who sits on the Athens County Food Pantry Board told me they got so much money they didn’t know what to do, and had consultants speak to them to help them figure out a plan to help reach more people in the county.

And, justifiably so, everyone in the county was elated. Elated that our small community was suddenly noticed by this great big country. Elated to be given so much good will and money from people all over the country. We can’t help but lift up Joe as a hero. One of the ways this jubilation was expressed was people started comparing Joe Burrow to Jesus because his speech led to feeding so many people in his hometown, or at least his home county. And while I do not want nor intend to take anything away from Joe, and want to go on record again stating I am impressed by his philanthropy, it is not theologically accurate to compare him or anyone else to Jesus. In today’s Gospel Jesus did not lift up his hometown the way Joe lifts up his, and at the end of the Gospel reading today the people in Jesus’ hometown tried to kill him. Besides, such a comparison puts a heavy, unrealistic, and unfair burden on Joe.

Jesus is not a hero nor a professional football player looking to give back to his community. Jesus is the Son of God; Jesus is God manifest whose mission was like that of the prophets who went before; outward focused, led by the Holy Spirit, and the manifestation of the liberating, healing, and forgiving love of God for all people.

Jesus wasn't going to hang around Nazareth doing miracles, he was going to other places to be among many other people so they could see God's love in their midst. Jesus' message to his hometown community is the love of God can't be contained to one place, or time. God doesn't wear one team's colors, and that can be a difficult message to hear, just ask a Green Bay Packers fan. That truth is so difficult to hear, it seems the people in Nazareth were offended and angry enough to threaten violence.

This is not the last time crowds will turn on Jesus. Today's Gospel reading foreshadows Holy Week's events that led to Jesus' crucifixion. But today, we are many weeks from Holy Week, and Jesus walked safely through the angry crowd like a miracle, the only one his hometown witnessed. Again, this interpretation is not intended to make the people of Jesus' hometown look bad, I don't endorse continuing to vilify or demonize anybody or group of people. Instead, I wanted to show how easy it can be to get upset when a local celebrity appears to turn their back on their hometown. Ask any Green Bay Packers fan how difficult it was to forgive their former beloved hero quarterback and 3-time MVP Brett Favre for playing for their longtime rivals the Minnesota Vikings. It was not pretty.

Perhaps it is not a good idea to think of Jesus as a celebrity who inspired charity and instead recognize him as the savior of humanity. This might be much more helpful when we find ourselves suffering and disappointed Jesus doesn't step in and rescue us with a miracle, like magically eliminating the covid-19 pandemic. Perhaps instead, the miracles are around us in unexpected places: the generosity of another, the person who helps us feel seen, or when we can help someone else feel seen, like when a young professional football player drew attention to the suffering poverty causes in his hometown, or when we can face a difficult situation and in so doing find unexpected peace. When we can let go of getting our way and listen to the Holy Spirit letting God have God's way, that's when we all can share in the miracles of God's healing, liberating, forgiving love, in any time or place.

And, it is still okay to take a break and enjoy a football game and local celebrity too.



[Watch a video version of Mother Deborah's Sermon HERE.](#)

**The Rev. Deborah Woolsey, a Sermon for the Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany, January 30, 2022**

**Please include in your prayers**

**In our world**, we pray for Justin, Archbishop of Canterbury, and for Michael, our Presiding Bishop; we pray for peace with justice throughout the Middle East. We pray for the victims of the coronavirus. We pray for all people affected by natural and environmental disasters. We pray also for the people who are suffering from war, especially all asylum seekers, immigrants and refugees. We pray for Joe our President,

Kamala our Vice-President, Mike, our Governor, the Supreme Court and the members of Congress.

**In our diocese**, In our diocese, we pray for our Provisional Bishop Wayne, the search process for a new bishop, and for Kenneth, Nedi, and Wendell our assisting bishops. We pray for the National Guard being deployed to help with the coronavirus.

**In our parish**, we pray for Good Shepherd's continued growth, for our Rector Rev. Deborah Woolsey, for our Associate Priests, Rev. Leslie Flemming, Rev. Katharin Foster and Rev. David McCoy, for our ministry to students, the university, and the community. We pray for our friends at St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Merida, Mexico.

**Those Whom our Prayers are Requested:** Belle, Bill S., Bud and Carol, Chris L., Elena, Gloria R., Gordon, Jan S, Lacey, Land and baby Rispone, Laura, Miriam, Sharon, Bill, Annie and Kathleen, Tommy, Jeannet Barratt, Danny Cain, Zelma Coleman, Lee Kembell-Cook, Glinnis Davies, Dick Dean, Phyllis Dean, Richard DeNune, Caryl Docherty, Chris Eaton, Ben Foster, Norm Fox, Jan Gault, Jennifer Hall, Susanne Hill, Debbie Hunsberger, Nancy and Bob Jackson, Peter Kachenko and family, Monya Monroe, Julie Nehls, Linda Nippert, Lauren O'Brien, Doug and Michelle Parsons, Jane Patton, Dale Paul, Dan and Nancy Reedy, Ann Shelly, Sandy Spades, Michael Vaughn, Consuelo Walker and family, Benjamin Woolsey, Emily Woolsey, Zita Zolpys, and we pray for all who care for them. \*\*

**Birthdays:** Ruth Clever (1/30); Michael Luelloff (1/31), Meara Shannon (2/4)

\*\* Full names for this section are normally not published online but since there is not a printed Sunday Bulletin or in-house 10:30 service, for the time being we will publish full names unless requested otherwise. If you have a name to be added to the prayer list, Lynn Graham maintains this information. Lynn may be reached at **740-593-5098** or **grahammowery@aol.com**.

## Music

### **Music** for January 30, Epiphany 4 – year C 2022

**Prelude – [Partita on “Lord Jesus Christ, be present now”](#)** Paul Manz  
Two texts using this tune are in our hymnal - #3 and #310

**[Gloria - S280](#)**

**Offertory Hymn – Hymnal 359 [“God of the prophets”](#)** St. 1,2,3,5

**[Sanctus - S130](#)**

**Communion Music -- [“Where true love and charity dwell, God is always](#)**



[there](#)" (Gerald Near) See hymn 606

Postlude -- [Fugue on the "Kyrie"](#) (Francois Couperin)

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## At-Home Worship

Christ Church Cathedral Cincinnati live streams via Vimeo its services Sundays at 10 a.m. These are saved and can be watched later without having to log in.

<https://vimeo.com/event/4306>

Though the doors of the National Cathedral in Washington are, like ours, temporarily closed, there's much to explore at the the Cathedral's online portal.

<https://cathedral.org/worship/>

## Coming up on the Calendar

### Coming Up:

**Sunday, February 6, 10:30 a.m. - - Holy Eucharist**

**Sunday, February 13, 10:30 a.m. - - Holy Eucharist**

**Wednesday, February 10, 9:30 a.m. - - Prayer Shawl Meeting**

**Thursday, February 17, 7:00 p.m. - - Vestry Meeting, ZOOM**

**Sunday, February 20, 10:30 a.m. - - Holy Eucharist**

**Wednesday, February 24, 9:30 a.m. - - Prayer Shawl Meeting**

**Sunday, February 27, 10:30 a.m. - - Holy Eucharist**

**CrossRoads Café now open Sundays after church service and Monday - Friday**

**9:30 - 11:30 am.**

## Notes

# Volunteers Needed to Help with Sunday Services

## Counter

We need your help counting the financial gifts given during the church service. All you have to do is stay a few minutes after the church service on Sundays and count the money collected during the service, fill out a form stating what you counted, then put the money in a pouch and put the pouch in the closet in the church office. Time: it will take approximately 15 minutes to accomplish. How often you are asked to do it depends on how many people volunteer. Volunteers will be put on a schedule. If you are interested, please contact Mother Deborah at [revdebwoolsey@gmail.com](mailto:revdebwoolsey@gmail.com)

## Greeter

We need your help greeting people when they enter the church for the service. All you have to do is arrive 10 minutes before the church service starts, stand or sit by the door or on the porch, warmly greet people as they enter, remind them to put their mask on if they forgot or offer them one of our free masks, and answer any questions like where the bathrooms are if they ask. Once everyone has arrived, you have no other duties. How often you are asked to do this depends on how many people step up to volunteer, all volunteers will be put on a schedule. If you are interested, please contact Mother Deborah at [revdebwoolsey@gmail.com](mailto:revdebwoolsey@gmail.com)

Thank you for your help, it is by working together that we can offer in-person Sunday morning church services.

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## Waiting for Spring, Just a Few More Weeks (Note the little guy in the rocks)

The little juniper in the Church's front lawn has ambitions -- perhaps a little unrealistic for a low growing shrub -- "It's like a grain of mustard seed, which, when it is sown in the earth, though it is less than all the seeds that are on the earth, yet when it is sown, grows up, and becomes greater than all the herbs, and puts out great branches, so that the birds of the sky can lodge under its shadow." [Mark 4:30–32]



## Contacts, Information

### Quick Links

[Parish website](#)

[Sermons](#)

### Pandemic Notes:

[Link to the DSO guidelines for returning to in-person worship](#)

As of August 5 the Diocese COVID

[Parish calendar](#)

[Contact us](#)

[Campus Interest](#)

[E-News Guidelines](#)  
and [Back Issues](#)

[Diocese S Ohio](#)

[\[E\]Connections](#)

[Episcopal  
News Service](#)

[Episcopal Café](#)

Guidelines request all persons wear masks inside the church building regardless of vaccination status.

**Office Hours:** 10:00 a.m.– 2:00 p.m.,  
Monday through Thursday.  
Masks are required.

The **Church Building** is not open for public meetings and gatherings but during office/CrossRoads hours the **thrift shop** and **chapel** are available for individuals.  
Masks are required.

**CrossRoads Café is only open Sundays after the service until the news school year.**

## Contact Information

**For pastoral needs**, please contact The Rev. Deborah Woolsey at 937-689-8895 (cell) or 740-593-6877 (church), or by e-mail at [revdebwoolsey@gmail.com](mailto:revdebwoolsey@gmail.com).

**To find out more about Good Shepherd and other matters**, please contact Alex Buckley, Senior Warden, at 740-593-5513 or by e-mail at [macbuck@yahoo.com](mailto:macbuck@yahoo.com).

**For maintenance matters**, please leave a note at the office or contact Ted Foster, Junior Warden, at 740-593-8615 or by e-mail at [foster.theodore@gmail.com](mailto:foster.theodore@gmail.com). **For emergencies**, please call The Rev. Deborah Woolsey at 937-689-8895.

**NON-emergency messages** can be left on the church's answering machine (740-593-6877). The parish office administrator is Barbara Martin (740-593-6877) or [barbara@chogs.org](mailto:barbara@chogs.org).

The Episcopal Church of the Good Shepherd  
64 University Terrace, Athens OH 45701  
740-593-6877  
[chogs@chogs.org](mailto:chogs@chogs.org)  
[www.chogs.org](http://www.chogs.org)

## [DONATE to Good Shepherd](#)

This takes you to the Parish Home page where you can donate on-line via PayPal. If you have a preference, please indicate on the the "Add special instructions to the seller" section the purpose of the donation -- e.g. organ fund, plate collection, etc.

Check out the Church's [YouTube Channel](#).

LIKE us on Facebook [Episcopal Church of the Good Shepherd 45701](#)

## Office Hours:

10:00 am - 2:00 pm  
Monday - Thursday

Masks are required.

