

Epiphany Thursday

[1 Jn 4:19–5:4](#)

Beloved, we love God because
he first loved us.

If anyone says, “I love God,”

but hates his brother, he is a liar;

for whoever does not love a brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen.

This is the commandment we have from him:

Whoever loves God must also love his brother.

Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ
is begotten by God,

and everyone who loves the Father
loves also the one begotten by him.

In this way we know that we love the children of God when we love God and obey his commandments.

For the love of God is this,

that we keep his commandments.

And his commandments are not burdensome,

for whoever is begotten by God conquers the world.

And the victory that conquers the world is our faith.

[Lk 4:14-22](#)

Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit,
and news of him spread throughout the whole region.

He taught in their synagogues and was praised by all.

He came to Nazareth, where he had grown up,
and went according to his custom

into the synagogue on the sabbath day.

He stood up to read and was handed a scroll of the prophet Isaiah.

He unrolled the scroll and found the passage where it was written:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,

because he has anointed me

to bring glad tidings to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives

and recovery of sight to the blind,

to let the oppressed go free,

and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord.

Rolling up the scroll, he handed it back to the attendant and sat down,
and the eyes of all in the synagogue looked intently at him.

He said to them,

“Today this Scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing.”

And all spoke highly of him

and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth.

Epiphany Thursday 2008

[1 Jn 4:19–5:4](#), [Lk 4:14-22](#)

“...and were amazed at the gracious words that came from him.”

And yet, before this synagogue encounter was over, the congregation tried to hurl Jesus off of a cliff.

I guess I better be careful with my homilies.

The synagogue story follows Jesus' baptism in the Jordan and his 40 days in the desert.

This is the start of his ministry in the Gospel of Luke.

Here he claims,

“Today this Scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing.”

Jesus is claiming to be the fulfillment of the Old Testament.

He is the messiah that was promised.

Well, as a police officer, I have had contact with some precariously balanced people who have claimed to have been sent by God.

To tell you the truth, I took them all to the Kalamazoo Psychiatric Hospital to continue their ministry.

I just hope Jesus wasn't one of them.

I treated them all with gentleness and respect just in case he was.

Remember, how you treat “these least brothers of mine, you did for me.”

You see, if you aren't the messiah and claim to be the messiah, you are likely mentally ill.

The same goes for that son of a carpenter in Nazareth.

Is he crazy or is he the messiah? There's not much room in the middle to explain it.

And how can we figure which is the answer 2000 years later?

Well, there are a lot of ways to help us.

We can look at Church history which has a lot of documentary evidence to support the proposition of Jesus as messiah.

We can look at the teachings of the Church Fathers and Doctors (which also included women, by the way).

But instead of starting a study session right now, I think we can be look for the answer you intuitively know in your heart.

Our first reading helps.

What do you know of love? What is your experience?

As you hear the first letter of John talk about love, is it consistent with your experience?

“We love God because he first loved us.”

How did he first love us?

By creating us, surely, but that is kind of philosophical. I don't remember that.

An initial demonstration of God's love is how our mother's took care of us when we were sick. What kind of love is it that which motivates someone to clean up a sick kid the way sick kids get sick?

That's not fun, that's love.

And if you don't love your brother or sister, you are missing the God of love that resides in them. You are dismissing God when you dismiss your brother or sister.

And as you intuitively recognize what I said is true, who told us all that stuff about being children of God and being brothers?

Well, wasn't that the carpenter's son in Nazareth?

Can a crazy guy actually get this stuff right, the stuff that leads billions of people to the ultimate expression of love which is what we offer each other in relationship with our creator?

I think Jesus got it right. If he says he's the messiah, well I buy that too.

And in his fulfillment of the scripture, I find fulfillment in my life.

This passage from the letter of St. John is a wonderful passage with which to sit down and contemplate.

You will be reassured that truly Jesus is the son of God and your brother.

You can be reassured, that yes, you can truly love.