

Each of the readings today have distinct meanings. The first speaks of the power and permanency of the prophet, chosen and sent by God no matter how many are against him.

The second reading speaks of the importance and preeminence of love.

The Gospel ends with the non-acceptance of Jesus by His own town folk and neighbors.

Jesus is certainly sent by God to preach and teach about the Kingdom of God and performed many miracles to establish His credentials. Those who saw Him as He was growing up and, perhaps, were even His youthful companions were “amazed at the gracious words that came from His mouth.” And despite their amazement they wondered “Isn’t this the Son of Joseph?” They had a hard time reconciling this humble carpenter with the wonders that He performed elsewhere. In their midst, they wanted to see if this truly was the one who did so many healings and wonders elsewhere. Jesus knew their doubts and lack of faith, and told them no sign or wonders would (could) be done in His native town.

To make things worse Jesus gave two examples of marvels reported in the Old Testament that were performed in lands other than Israel implying that His own town would not be so blessed. His neighbors and town folks got the message and were incensed to the extent they wanted to do away with Him by casting Him off a cliff.

Has Jesus become so familiar to us that we no longer recognize or pay attention and do not give due reverence and thanks for all the incredible marvels and blessings we have already received? So much has our merciful Lord loved us!

Paul encourages us to “strive eagerly for the greatest spiritual gifts.” Aren’t spiritual gifts freely given by God? How does our striving, even eagerly, convince, encourage, or move God to give us such gifts?

The probability is we already have many spiritual gifts: the gift of knowledge and belief in God, the gift of Christ’s redemptive actions, the gift of the Trinity within us as a result of our Baptism, the gifts of family, friends, community. Are these not spiritual gifts? All gifts given by God (as we are) are spiritual gifts.

But we are also encouraged to seek the greatest of spiritual gift without which all others are as nothing. And that gift is the gift of love.

Love should permeate our entire being and all our actions. Love starts at home. Do we love ourselves? Without a good deal of self-love it would be fairly difficult to love anyone or anything else. For, we would thus not know how to extend love to others.

Self-love is not selfish love. Self love recognizes that we are beings created in the image and likeness of God and as such are deeply lovable as well as capable of loving.

God loves you. Love yourself as God loves you and then spread that love to others.