

When God calls you

Jeremiah 1:4-10

Introduction

- In this week's Old Testament text, we are provided with another way in which God's presence became vital and God's Word came alive through a profoundly personal and totally transforming "call" in Jeremiah's life to a prophetic ministry.

- The word of the Lord came to a young fellow named Jeremiah.
- Here is what the Lord said to him, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations."
- Jeremiah said, "Ah, Lord God! Truly I do not know how to speak, for I am only a boy."
- Catch those words: "Only a boy."
- But the Lord said to Jeremiah, "Do not say, '~I am only a boy'; for you shall go to all to whom I send you, and you shall speak whatever I command you, Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you, says the Lord."

Jeremiah's God was a God with a plan

- Then the Lord put out his hand and touched Jeremiah's mouth; and the Lord said to him, "Now I have put my words in your mouth . . ."
- Only a boy. And yet, a messenger from God. Here's a good word to eliminate from your vocabulary--it's the word, "only."
- Only a teenager, only a woman, only an old-timer, only a high school graduate--the world is full of people who did amazing things even though they were only this or only that.

Only Human Type Of Excuses

- Preacher Fred Craddock has a bone to pick with people who use this phrase: "I'm only human."
- When do we usually use those words? Isn't it after we have royally fouled things up.
- I gave into temptation-- "Well, I'm only human." I overslept this morning-- "Well, I'm only human." I ate that last piece of chocolate cake. "Well, I'm only human."
- That's our excuse for all our little flaws and failings.
- But Craddock says that we need to reconsider this statement.
- The Bible says that we were created "a little lower than the angels." We are the crown of God's creation. God sent His Son to die in our behalf. No one was ever made of IRON.!!!

After all, I'm human

- Craddock suggests to us that whenever somebody we know does something right or when someone commends us for doing something extremely well, we say, "After all, I'm human."
- Because to be human is to be created in the image of God.
- As the writer of Ephesians says, "You are God's masterpiece."(4) A profound thought.
- We are God's masterpiece. Never say, "I'm only this . . . I'm only that."

He is a persistent God

- God also is persistent in calling Jeremiah to ministry.
- When God calls Jeremiah, there is none of the "Here I am, Lord; send me!" enthusiasm that Isaiah expresses in response to his call.
- In fact, Jeremiah's response mirrors those of the great prophet/leader Moses and the prophet/judge Gideon.
- Jeremiah is initially quite resistant to the idea of being God's mouthpiece to the people of Judah.
- He protests that he is too young, too immature.
- But God is persistent, and although we hear no acceptance speech from Jeremiah, he apparently agrees to serve.
- Consider what aspects of your own sense of call might illustrate God's persistence.

God with positive purpose even in judgment

- But from the outset, Jeremiah's prophetic message also contains kernels of hope.
- "To build" and "to plant" are constructive, new energy enterprises.
- Thus, while Jeremiah's primary role was as a pre-exilic messenger, warning the people of the Babylonian exile to come, there remained at the heart of Jeremiah's words, seeds of hope and a vision of a future when "planting" and "building up" would once again be part of God's divine plan for the people.

Prevenient Grace

- I was reared in the Wesleyan tradition, I know that there is a phrase that describes the way God works with Jeremiah.
- It is called prevenient grace.
- Prevenient grace is grace that comes before - before anything you or I can do or even think about doing.
- Before Jeremiah even knows that there is such a being as God, God already knows Jeremiah personally.
- By the way, the apostle Paul testifies to this same prenatal knowledge and appointment by God as he describes his own call:

Paul claims prevenient grace too.

- But when God, who had set me apart before I was born and called me through his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son to me, so that I might proclaim him among the Gentiles, I did not confer with any human being, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were already apostles before me, but I went away at once into Arabia, and afterwards I returned to Damascus. Galatians 1:15-17

Paul became an amazing instrument of GOD

- But he became an amazing instrument of God. Just like Jeremiah.
- Just like Simon Peter. Just like Mary Magdalene. We could put an "only" in front of all of their names.
- But look what God did through them. Imagine what God could do through you and me if we trusted ourselves completely to God's leadership.
- I don't care what your situation is, one thing a Christian should never say is, "I'm only such-and-such."
- You are a child of God. It remains to be seen what God may do through you.

The Lord needs you too!

- The Lord Needs You!
- Jeremiah tried to avoid his direct call from God.
- So did Moses, Isaiah, Ezekiel.
- Jonah tried to slip out the back.
- Peter vacillated mightily.
- Paul cringed at the thought.
- Each of these people refused to think of themselves as strong and capable. But God needed them, nonetheless:

God with provisions

- God always equips his ministers and messengers and disciples for their tasks, however, providing his sufficiency where they have none.
- To Jeremiah's "I do not know," the Lord replies, "I knew you."
- To Jeremiah's "I am only a youth," God answers, "I am with you," and then he gives Jeremiah the words he is to speak.
- As Paul says, God's grace is sufficient for us, and his power is made perfect in our weakness (2 Corinthians 12:9).

God of recreation

- The reason for God's call to Jeremiah and to us is very clear. God is working constantly to make his creation good once again.
- We human beings ruin God's good world with our sin and rebellion against his will, attempting to be our own deities and to fashion our own future.
- The result is strife between male and female, between brother and brother, between nations, with God's creation marred by "thorns and thistles," the God-given gifts of beauty and work turned into ugliness and drudgery, all community becomes impossible, and over it all the sentence of death (Genesis 3-11)

From curses to blessing

- Now God works tirelessly to turn our cursed existence into blessing (Genesis 12:3).
- To give to all humanity the gift of abundant life, in a community of justice and love and peace that knows how to live for the Lord.

Ordination right in your mother's womb

- God lays his plans for the salvation of his world very carefully.
- He tells Jeremiah, "Before I formed you ... before you were born," (v. 5). Before the prophet was ever conceived in the womb, God knew his task for Jeremiah, and "consecrated" him, that is, set him apart, to be his prophet.
- In like manner, God knew and planned each one of us for a special role in his purpose. God does not create human beings simply for nothing. For each of us he has a purpose before he ever makes us.

Potential servants of God have been lost.

- God had to let him know he had been chosen before he was born.
- How tragic for Israel if this powerful prophet had been aborted.
- How many potential servants of the GOD had been lost
- As soon as Mary spoke, Elisabeth's baby(John the Baptist) leaped in her womb.
- Gabriel announced to Mary of the birth of Christ.(Luke 1:26-38)

God always makes provisions

- God equips Jeremiah for his task by putting his words in Jeremiah's mouth (v. 9).
- In other words, Jeremiah's prophecy is not the result of his own thought.
- He has not pondered the state of his society or read "the signs of the times," and decided that he simply must speak out against them.
- Nor has his prophecy been the result of his own religious zeal and indignation or even love for his people -- and he does love them dearly.
- No. Jeremiah's prophetic proclamations are words from the Lord, given to him as gifts from God.

God who equips

- His prophecies come from God alone (Jer. 15:16), and when Jeremiah tries to say something different, God rebukes him sternly (Jer. 15:19).
- In the same manner, our tasks done for the Lord are made possible by gifts given to us.
- In the Epistle lesson of 1 Corinthians 13, the faith, hope, and love that Christians are to manifest in their lives are not products of their own thought and work, but gifts of the Spirit, as Paul makes very clear.
- Apart from God's equipment of us, we cannot do the Lord's work.

- The task given to Jeremiah is fearful. He is not only to "build and to plant," not only to comfort and give hope to his people, which he does after the fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonians in 587 B.C.
- (Jeremiah chapters. 30 and 31 are often called "The Book of Comfort").
- Jeremiah is also to "pluck up and break down" (1:10).
- To utter those powerful, active words of judgment that will work their effect in Judah's life until they bring about the nation's downfall.
- (The concept of the Word of God in the Bible is that it acts in human life to bring about that of which it speaks.(Isaiah 55:10-11; Ezekiel 12:28.)

I will be with you

- It was a terrible undertaking.
- He was to spare no class, no rank, no order.
- Kings, princes, priests, and people were all to be alike solemnly warned of the sure judgments that were coming upon them.
- And the like work has to be done now.

JEREMIAH WAS DESTROY AND RESTORE

- God tells Jeremiah that he has been appointed his spokesman to express to his society their spiraling downward plunge into the abyss of destruction.
- God says that Israel will be uprooted, torn down, destroyed, and overthrown.
- Today's society parallels that ancient society of Jeremiah.
- Morals, actions, and philosophy are all so anti-Christian that it calls for men and women to stand up and cry out against them.
- The reason God tells Jeremiah there must be this uprooting is to rebuild or replant a godly society.

Called to pull down and to rebuild

- Jeremiah 's God recognised that some things need to be rooted out and destroyed before other things could be planted to grow.
- Jeremiah uses the terminology of clearing the field in order that it might be planted with crop that would be productive.
- Certain institutions and forces must be eliminated before good institutions and causes can grow.

New wine cannot be put in old wine skin

- The reason for the judgment of God in Judah's life, and in ours, is clear.
- God cannot give us new life without first ridding us of the old.
- New wine cannot be put into old wineskins, nor the new patch sewn on an old garment (Matthew 9:16-17).
- We cannot lead Christian lives while preserving our old habits of sin.
- God uses his judgments on us daily to rid us of our evil ways, in order that he may make us new creatures in Jesus Christ.
- He will not leave us alone in our evil, because he loves us and does not want us to die the death that our sin deserves.
- Rather, he constantly works to rid us of evil in order that he may give us a life of good.

No opposition is greater than GOD

- It is not surprising that Jeremiah is told he will meet opposition.
- In fact, 1:18-19 tells us that all in Judah will fight against the prophet, because the Judeans do not, any more than we, like to hear that they are in the wrong.
- Christians in our day meet opposition, too. It is not easy to be good in our society, in which goodness is out of fashion.
- Divorce is rampant in our day, as are adultery and abortion, cheating and lying, selfishness and pride.
- Anyone who lives by God's word these days meets snickers and scorn and sometimes persecution.
- They are "nerds," "squares," and worst of all, "irrelevant", "out of touch"

Do not be afraid

- But Jeremiah is given the promise of God that is given also to us.
- "Be not afraid of them," says the Lord, "for I am with you to deliver you" (v. 8).
- In the midst of every trial that confronts a Christian, who tries to live in faith, hope, and love, God is present with his own to strengthen and guide and reassure that his is the way and truth and abundant life.

Good results/ no excuses

- “To build and to plant” (ver. 10).
- The encumbered ground had first to be cleared and cleansed, but that done, the fabric of a true life should be up reared, and principles pure, holy, and blessed should have root in the hearts of all.
- A lot of people had made excuses too.

- - Moses - with his stammering tongue
- - Jonah - with his misguided patriotism
- - Jeremiah - with his inferiority complex, overwhelmed by a sense of his deficiencies and disabilities
- - Isaiah - overwhelmed by his unworthiness
- - Elijah - who was manic-depressive at times, almost immobilized
- - Ezekiel - rendered speechless
- - Paul - whose "thorn in the flesh" was constantly crippling him
- - Peter - fearful and impetuous
- - Jesus of Nazareth- can you think of a more unlikely candidate for "world Messiah" than Jesus?
- Yet for God, "strength made perfect in weakness "makes the perfect servant. Zechariah 4:6 says it all, "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, says the Lord."

The lord is calling you today

- May you hear the call of God in your life - a call that is grounded in prevenient grace, persistently spoken, and personally issued to you for the sake of a world in need.
- And may your faith, breathed into your heart by the Holy Spirit, guide you to answer that call in the name of Jesus.
- When God calls us, it is a very personal calling for the sake of a person or a community or a world in need.
- It is a Spirit-breathed opportunity where our skills, interests and, in many cases, our experience are just what is needed to bless and enliven a life or minister to a specific situation.
- And as the situation we are ministering to changes or our lives change, the nature or shape of our call will change, too.
Amen.

- Let this prayer soak your soul.
- Almighty God, in every age you have called out men and women to be your faithful servants.
- We believe you have now called us to join that great company who seek to follow you.
- Grant unto us today and always a clear vision of your call and strength to fulfil the ministry assigned to us.
- We pray in the name of Christ. Amen