

August 25, 2019
Pastor Erin Bouman, Irving Park Lutheran Church
Jeremiah 1:4-10

The Call of Jeremiah and You

It's excellent timing to hear today's first reading from the book of Jeremiah, this passage known as the call of Jeremiah. God says to Jeremiah, "I've got a job for you. I've been forming you for this from when you were in your mother's womb. You shall go to all to whom I send you. You shall speak whatever I command you. Today I appoint you over nations and over kingdoms, to pluck up and to pull down, to destroy and overthrow, to build and to plant."

It's excellent timing for this reading, this call, this story of recruitment, because right now here at church we are looking ahead to fall and doing some recruitment. Today you may be appointed over nations and over kingdoms... by teaching Sunday school. We could use one more teacher, and we could always use a couple more subs. Darcie Wadycki is the person to talk to about that. Darcie can you stand up and wave? If not by teaching there are many other ways you can support the Sunday School ministry. Also, today, you may be appointed to go to whom God send you, to speak what God says ... by being a Greeter. Sharon Iverson organizes the Greeting ministry, Sharon, can you stand and wave? Today you may be appointed to pluck up and pull down, to build and to plant ... by helping with our fall Stewardship campaign. Nancy Hall coordinates that. Nancy, can you stand up and wave? Everyone's favorite team, Stewardship, the one that asks you for money. Today you may be appointed to it or to any number of other committees, there's also the group that gives feedback to our incoming seminary student, he starts next week, and the Witness Team could use more members, and the Worship Team, there's that bulletin announcement about Church Council.

Of course, there's always reasons one may demur. Everyone has an excuse, including Jeremiah. As we also hear in today's reading, Jeremiah responds to God's call, "Ah Lord God! Truly I do not know..." Truly that is sometimes the response, "Oh God...I don't know..." Resistance and reluctance are initial responses to a number of prophetic call stories in the Bible. Remember Moses? Moses had all kinds of excuses about why he shouldn't be the one to go down to Egypt to lead the people out of slavery. To cut Moses some slack, the Exodus was probably more taxing than getting to church in time for choir rehearsal. Did you need more choir members Bing? How about more special musicians, like our special group of singers today?

Oh, but you may say, "I can't sing like them." That's no excuse, you could join the bell choir. To be a bell ringer all you have to do for that is be able to count. People come up with all kinds of excuses, Jeremiah's was his age. That's Jeremiah pictured on the cover of the bulletin. We often think of prophets as having long white beards, but when Jeremiah was called he didn't even need a tweezers to shave. Jeremiah was young when God called him; it was not all that long since he had been in his mother's womb. Jeremiah thought that was a reason he shouldn't be called. As he says to God. "I am only a boy."

Yes, and Samuel was only a boy when God called him to be a prophet. It was the middle of the night when God called Samuel, so, as young ones do when woken up in the middle of the night, Samuel went to check in with his elder, his mentor, Eli. Eli knew what was going on. Eli told Samuel, "That is God recruiting you. Next time you hear it, say, 'Here I am!'" And Samuel did. And David was only a boy when he faced Goliath. David was still slight enough that the adult sized armor slid right off him. David didn't need it. He went with God, walked right up to

the foe and said, "Here I am." And Miriam, the older sister of Moses, Miriam was a prophet, too. Miriam was only a girl when she watched over baby Moses in his basket in the reeds, and then took prophetic action, telling the daughter of Pharaoh where a nursemaid might be found, that baby Moses might survive, grow up to lead the people to freedom. And Mary, the mother Jesus, Mary was little more than a girl when the angel spoke to her and said, "Greetings, favored one, the Lord is with you." Mary demurred at first, but then said, "Here I am, a servant of the Lord." And then sang a prophetic song about how God acts: "He has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant ... He has lifted up the lowly."

"Do not say I am only a boy," God says. God does not let a person's age prevent them from having an impact. Garrett Brodersen was only a boy, but what an impact he had, how far reaching his life, and his love, and his talents, the hundreds of people who came to his funeral, the words they spoke about him. Garrett's Confirmation class was all here, all nine of them. They go to different schools, for some of them school had already started, but they all came to church this past Monday to be here together. They had reached out to one another ahead of time, they themselves initiated, planned, and practiced a remembrance to share. They were the first ones to come forward and they all stood together at the lectern in solidarity, and sadness, and gratitude. Some witnessed by their presence; some witnessed with words. No one would say of them, "He is only a boy, she is only a girl." And the acolyte for the funeral, Rio, young Rio, who looked up to Garrett like a brother, what a witness she made: acolyting at his funeral, carrying the light in the darkness of our grief. Do not say, "She is only a girl."

Rio could do what she did, because she had been trained by Marty Anderson, our head usher and lead candy distributor. Rio could do what she did because just before the funeral began she had Eleanor Kepp, our careful, caring caretaker of worship implements, standing next to her, tenderly reminding her of where to go, what to do, how holy it was, what she was doing. Rio could do what she did because she had her mother, who carried her in her womb, bringing her here week after week, loving her through it all. Those Confirmation classmates could do what they did because they had had Confirmation teachers, Tim Bouman and Sandra Stumme and John von Essen, who had guided them through two years of study and service and community building here. Those young people could stand up there together because they had done Christmas Plays here, because they had been through years of Sunday School, many of them had been in class together from when they were in Pre-School, coming here since they were barely out of their mother's womb.

The mother of our Lord was still young when she bore in her womb the light that enlightens everyone, the light that was coming into the world, the light that the darkness did not overcome, the light that shines out of the empty tomb. We are now the light bearers. We are called to share the light to all nations, the light of the world. We are stewards of the mysteries of God. We do this in countless small ways, which are not small at all. You are appointed over nations and kingdoms when you teach Sunday school. You speak what God says and go where God says to go when you welcome, when you greet someone in God's name. You pluck up and pull down and build up and plant when you steward your time and your talents and your treasure to what really matters. You are prophets, when you hear God calling, and you say, "Here I am."