

You Shall Go to All to Whom I Send You  
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First Presbyterian Church of Waukesha  
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**Jeremiah 1:4-10**

<sup>4</sup> Now the word of the Lord came to me saying,

<sup>5</sup> ‘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.’

<sup>6</sup> Then I said, ‘Ah, Lord God! Truly I do not know how to speak, for I am only a boy.’ <sup>7</sup> But the Lord said to me,

‘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.

<sup>8</sup> Do not be afraid of them,  
for I am with you to deliver you,  
says the Lord.’

<sup>9</sup> Then the Lord put out his hand and touched my mouth; and the Lord said to me,  
‘Now I have put my words in your mouth.

<sup>10</sup> See, today I appoint you over nations and over kingdoms,  
to pluck up and to pull down,  
to destroy and to overthrow,  
to build and to plant.’

**Luke 4:21-30**

<sup>21</sup> Then he began to say to them, ‘Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.’ <sup>22</sup> 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?’ <sup>23</sup> He said to them, ‘Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb, “Doctor, cure yourself!” And you will say, “Do here also in your home town the things that we have heard you did at Capernaum.”’ <sup>24</sup> And he said, ‘Truly I tell you, no prophet is accepted in the prophet’s home town. <sup>25</sup> But the truth is, there were many widows in Israel in the time of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up for three years and six months, and there was a severe famine over all the land; <sup>26</sup> yet Elijah was sent to none of them except to a widow at Zarephath in Sidon. <sup>27</sup> There were also many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian.’ <sup>28</sup> When they heard this, all in the synagogue were filled with rage. <sup>29</sup> 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. <sup>30</sup> But he passed through the midst of them and went on his way.

These are tough words Jesus speaks to the people gathered in the synagogue. Just last week we read that he claimed the call of the prophet Isaiah as his own. Our reading this morning is a continuation of that same event; in scriptural terms, last week just happened as we pick up today’s reading. Jesus has just made clear that he is a prophet for God and outlined what he will do as a prophet – proclaim release to the captive and recovery of sight to the blind, to name two actions. Now, here today, he tells them what he will **not** do. Just like the prophets Elijah and Elisha, he will not tend to the widows and the sick in his hometown. As you would expect, these words are not well-received.

It is important to note, these words are not an indictment of the people or an active sign of disrespect toward them, even if they were received that way. Jesus' point, instead, is that they are not the ones for whom he was sent. The gospel of Luke, in particular, emphasizes Jesus' call to reach out to the Gentiles, the non-Jews. They were the ones most in need of hearing of God's love – those in the synagogue had been told of God's love for generations. Jesus was going out to those to whom he was sent.

It is the same way for all of God's prophets. We read of Jeremiah's call and God's response to Jeremiah's reluctance. God says, "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." Our readings come directly from the lectionary, the agreed upon list of readings as studied and decided by a council of Christian churches from the United States and Canada<sup>1</sup> so that no one part of the Bible is favored from Sunday to Sunday. I say the Holy Spirit was surely in their work for such texts to fall on a day where our worship is led by boys and girls, young men and young women, and where we welcome the young in faith into God's church.

God has a plan, a call, for us each, no matter our age, no matter our denomination or lack thereof, no matter our confidence in our abilities. As scholar James Calvin Davis has written, "Jeremiah is the 'everyman's' prophet; he shows us that fear, anxiety, resistance, inadequacy, even resentment are understandable reactions to the call to represent God in the world, and these feelings do not disqualify us from serving God's intentions... While God sometimes asks us to take up roles and responsibilities for which we may at the advent feel ill suited, often enough God prepares us for our calling *through* the interests and abilities we cultivate."<sup>2</sup>

Some churches, upon receiving new members, ask them to complete spiritual gifts inventories so that they might help those new members find immediate ways in which they might share their gifts with the church. I don't think spiritual gifts inventories are a bad idea; I trust that the Holy Spirit who activates the gifts, the interests and abilities, will be the same Spirit to nudge any member, any visitor, any believer, to use those gifts and to answer God's call. In speaking of call, I immediately connected with what George H. Martin writes: "Maybe your call is not exactly a voice. It could be a thought you could not shake – an idea that seems crazy or irrational. You try to ignore it, but it seems to be there again and again."<sup>3</sup> You might think "I'm too young," "I don't have enough knowledge about faith," or "I don't even know how to do that" in response to that thought you cannot shake. To that, just as with Jeremiah and countless others, God says, "Do not be afraid, for I am with you." Do not be afraid. Do not be afraid. God is with you.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.commontexts.org/rcl/RCL\\_Introduction\\_Web.pdf](http://www.commontexts.org/rcl/RCL_Introduction_Web.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> *Feasting on the Word: Year C, Volume 1*, p. 292, 294.

<sup>3</sup> *Feasting on the Word: Year C, Volume 1*, p. 290.

Let us pray: Lead us, O God, where you would have us go. Amen.