

Consecrated
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First Presbyterian Church of Waukesha
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Jeremiah 1:4-10

⁴ Now the word of the Lord came to me saying,

⁵ ‘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.’

⁶ Then I said, ‘Ah, Lord God! Truly I do not know how to speak, for I am only a boy.’ ⁷ 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.

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

⁹ 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.

¹⁰ 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.’

1 Corinthians 13:1-13

¹ If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. ² And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. ³ If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

⁴ Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant ⁵ or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; ⁶ it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. ⁷ It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

⁸ Love never ends. But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end. ⁹ For we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part; ¹⁰ but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end. ¹¹ When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways. ¹² For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see

face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known. ¹³And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.

Pray with me: May the words of my mouth and the meditations of all of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, Our Rock and Our Redeemer. Amen.

God says to Jeremiah, “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.” God consecrated Jeremiah for this, to this. A refresher from Merriam-Webster tells us “to consecrate” is to dedicate to a sacred purpose.¹ And sacred is set apart for God, just as is holy. As children of God, we have all been set apart for God, each of our lives have been dedicated to God’s purposes. That is how God formed us. Now I can’t name the specific things to which you have been consecrated – I’m not even certain of the details for myself – but I can say with certainty that there is one broad, overarching thing we’ve all been consecrated to: love. Love the action, love the verb.

Professor James Calvin Davis reminds us and reassures us about our consecrations, saying: “God calls every Christian to live the radical gospel of Christ through faithful obedience in the world. For some, that faithful obedience may require grand utterance, heroic measures, or world-changing actions. For others of us, it is in fulfilling the tasks of our social, political, and familial roles that we stand as prophets in the cultural wilderness, testifying to God’s intentions for the world in the way we live our lives.”² Even with that reassurance, we may feel, as the prophets before us articulated, inadequate for God’s call. Jeremiah, uncertain of what he had to offer, told God, “Ah, Lord God! Truly I do not know how to speak, for I am only a boy.” God replied to Jeremiah, “Do not say, ‘I am only a boy.’” God says to us, “Do not say, ‘I am only a teenager’ or ‘I didn’t go to seminary’ or ‘I am an engineer, nurse, or barkeep.’”

God told Jeremiah, “I am with you” and then, in Jeremiah’s recounting, “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.’” What part of you has God touched and what has God given to you? Has God

¹ <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/consecrate>

² *Feasting on the Word: Year C, Volume 1*, p. 290.

touched your heart and filled it with a compassion that breaks your heart? Has God touched your soul and filled it with song? Maybe your mind and filled it with visual creativity or a creative problem-solving way of thinking? Maybe you know already what God has touched and what God has given you. Today's reading from 1 Corinthians cautions us to be mindful when we use the gifts God has given. In essence, Paul tells the people of the church in Corinth, and us, if you use what God has given you without love, then you might as well not be using your gifts.

Since his early years on the Food Network, I have enjoyed watching Alton Brown and, on his show *Good Eats*, learning from him about the science of cooking, as well as the right tools for the job. He likes to repeat that he has no use for tools which have only one use. He takes great joy in finding new ways to use tools others have designated for a specific purpose, like a drywall tape tool. I tell you all of this because, once you've heeded Paul's instruction to use your gifts with love, you may find yourself wondering **how** to use your gifts. You may get hung up wondering how to use your gifts. This is the great thing – like the tools in Alton Brown's kitchen – there are a **bunch** of ways you can use your gifts.

Jeremiah tells God, "I do not know how to speak." For God, it's not about the how. God doesn't say in response to Jeremiah, "I'll show you how;" God says, "I'll show you what – you will use your gifts to pluck up and to pull down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant." Jeremiah didn't need to know which "how" is the right way; Jeremiah just needed to know "what" is right. Jeremiah knew what he was called to do and that was enough – he didn't need to know in advance how he would do what he was called to do.

If you've made peace with not knowing exactly how to do what God has called you to do, maybe you don't feel sure you know the "what" you are being called to. Heaven knows, I wonder that, too. There have been many occasions when I have sent this thought to the heavens: "I'm not sure this is what you want." What I do know is if what I am doing is guided by love, then I know I can't be too far off. So how do you suss out the "what"? Professor Davis has some thoughts on this, too. He says, "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.”³

Another way of putting this comes from a woman named Jen Hatmaker, who describes herself this way: “I write things, I say things, I raise a bunch of kids with the hubs, I love Jesus. That about covers it.”⁴ If you know me, you know I like when people are faithful **and** real – Jen Hatmaker is that. Around the start of the new year, she offered some advice through Facebook. She wrote, “As you move into 2016 hoping for a saner schedule that prioritizes your actual life and keeps you focused on the things that matter the most, let me share the decision-making filter my agent Curtis always gives me: ‘If it’s not a HE[CK] YES, then it’s a no.’ So that medium yes, that I-feel-like-should yes, that guilty yes, that coerced yes, that I-actually-hate-this-thing yes, that I-guess-so yes, that who-else-will-do-it yes, that careless yes, that default yes, that resentful yes, that I-probably-shouldn’t-but-struggle-with-boundaries yes? NO. Nope...Now, the things that make your heart race, your blood pump, the fire in your belly burn, your gifts to leap to life, and keep your family and home healthy and strong...the he[ck] yeses? ALL IN, BABY.”⁵ Your “what” is waiting for you. It’s jumping up and down, waving its arms, like a kid who knows the answer. Your “what” looks like “heck yes.” Do it with love, and you can’t be too far off.

Let us pray: God of our lives, for every time we say, “I am only...” remind us that is exactly what and how you made us to be, filled with your gifts. Amen.

³ *Feasting on the Word: Year C, Volume 1*, p. 294.

⁴ <https://www.facebook.com/Jen-Hatmaker-203920953040241/?fref=nf>

⁵ https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=881671191931877&id=203920953040241&fref=nf