

## WELCOME 7<sup>th</sup> July 2024 – 7<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost '24 B

Jeremiah 1:4-19

**Welcome!** It's great to be together again today! **Bible Study Qs/GPs** are there to equip you so God can lead you deeper into His word/work in your life, & farther out into his world to you can share that w/ someone else. We also use them for our **Zoom** Bible Study Catch-ups on Friday @ 1p.m.

**As we move into this week...** 'Hand-picked.' **Whether** it's an athlete who's now on the Olympic Team, or getting a first run at A grade, a grape or olive chosen for special bottling, or a gift that you know is just right for that special person...the act of hand-picking points **to a** deliberate intentional choosing for a specific purpose & outcome. When it comes to God's mission in the world, God also selects carefully w/ a particular plan in mind. The call to be his is deeply personal & specifically intended according to God's purpose. That's what Jeremiah hears when God calls his name.

God's call for you may not always be that dramatic, & like Jeremiah's may not be easy or particularly fruitful from your perspective, but your faithful obedience & willingness to be used by God in spite of what you see as obstacles may be just what God desires at this moment.

God calls us to be all in. Involved. Devoted. Fully committed to him. Fully invested in the communities he loves. Fully engaged in bringing his life & hope where we live.

**Then** the Lord reached out & touched my mouth & said,  
"Look, I have put my words in your mouth!  
Today I appoint you to stand up against nations & kingdoms.  
Some you must uproot & tear down, destroy & overthrow.  
Others you must build up & plant."

God calls from eternity and equips for the moment.

We'll experience & share that today...Let's pray...

## PRAYER OF THE DAY

*Reining Lord, you have drawn us to yourself so that your word might fill us & your presence surround us. Before the womb's wonders were our home, you knew us as unique individuals, sacred parts of your creation. In the mystery of the womb you protected us. Out of the womb you have brought us into your chosen people in your Son Jesus. Empower us to ministry & mission, in your name w/ the confidence & power of your divine touch...for Jesus' sake: Amen*

*Let's hear God's Word*

## **FAITH CHAT:**

1. What reservations do you have about your ability to serve God when you have opportunity & call to do so?
2. How would you describe the way God calls people to serve in a particular way or circumstance?

## 7 Pentecost '24 B – FULLY ENGAGED: BY GOD'S CALL

I don't remember her name...but I remember the moment someone suggested to me I needed to listen more closely to God. God had something he wanted me to do. I was about 17-18 yrs old...on my lunch break from my delivery job & I stopped in to see my mom at the law firm where she worked. I got off the elevator on the wrong floor & walked up to a desk where I saw this woman working & asked if she could help me find my mom...I knew I was in the wrong place but the right place was? She pointed to a staircase & said "Up. Then follow the hall all the way to the other side of the bldg...She's right there." But it took her a few beats to say it. There was a funny look on her face, & she didn't speak right away...almost like she couldn't breathe. Thought I scared her. But that wasn't it.

A couple days later my mother brought home an envelope for me from that woman. She'd been bold enough to write down what she described as a 'vision' of me surrounded in light & a face beside me she would interpret as Jesus...That's why she looked so surprised/startled...what was this young man doing running around downtown Houston w/ Jesus...? Yeah...I thought she was bonkers too at the time. Probably threw her note away told my mother to thank her...that's kinda cool in a weird way & really never gave it much thought. My mother said she was like that. Often described moments where she encountered Jesus or heard a word from God. My mother suggested caution, patience & attentiveness...she was rarely mistaken.

Jeremiah's call is similar...but more profound & unavoidable. *"The Lord gave me this message" Literally – "The word of the Lord came to me".* I wonder what that was like but however it came, that word is overpowering & overwhelming...*"I knew you before I formed you in your mother's womb. Before you were born I set you apart & I appointed you as my prophet to the nations."* God insists Jeremiah's life has a determined role in God's plan for God's people. This is no whim or fleeting spur of the moment transaction like an impulse buy @ Aldi's sale table. God speaks of Jeremiah from outside of time, not like some observer looking through binoculars but as sovereign Lord of the universe hand picking one of his very own for unique responsibility. *"I knew you b/4... B/4 you were born...I formed you...I appointed you...MY prophet..."* I know I've shared at other times my experience of looking at the street map of Wagga Wagga for the 1<sup>st</sup> time back in mid-2004...& seeing a cross superimposed over the city...not printed on the map & there only briefly...but enough to know God has called us to this city...& I don't just mean the Guilfoyles...I mean his church here now. **God** calls. **AND**...I am as convinced today as I was 20 years ago...it hasn't changed...we all live under that call to bring the life-saving life-transforming good news of the crucifixion & resurrection & reign of Jesus to everyone in this city.

Now I know...it's tricky & maybe dangerous to take a specific word to Jeremiah & apply it across the board...but stay w/ me...We know God is a God of order not chaos...not of confusion but peace (1 Cor 14:33). In God's sovereignty there is no random act or coincidence...Albert Einstein said, **"God** does not play dice." You are not some random happenstance or biologic or genetic spin of the roulette wheel. God says to his people: **People** of Israel, *I have chosen you as my servant. I am your Creator. You were in my care even before you were born. Is 44:1-2* Chosen. To Serve. Even b/4 you were born. **I** have cared for you since you were born. *Yes, I carried you before you were born. I will be your God throughout your lifetime—until your hair is white with age. I made you, & I will care for you. I will carry you along & save you. Is 46:3-4* Well sure John but that's Israel...back then...you can't mean that's...

**Even** before he made the world, God loved us & chose us in Christ to be holy & without fault in his eyes. *God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. This is what he wanted to do, & it gave him great pleasure. Eph. 1:4-5* Like Jeremiah you are no accident of history...purpose greater than you imagine

That purpose we already ought to know: **You** will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, & you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem & in all Judea & Samaria, & to the ends of the earth. - Acts 1:8 **For** we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago. – Eph 2:10  
To bring it into sharp relief:

**God** has called Living Water Fellowship to be a vibrant Christian community that glorifies God by inviting all people to become disciples of Jesus who grow in his grace & go in his power to show his love to the world

We know this. **God** calls. **WE ALL** live under that call to bring the life-saving life-transforming good news of the crucifixion/resurrection/reign of Jesus to everyone in this city. To contagiously infect all the places we inhabit & the people we encounter w/ the life of Jesus...w/ the promise of eternal life in him & of a life abounding in hope & joy here now. Don't believe me? Let's ask brother Martin: **Here** we take our stand: There is no other Word of God than that which is given **all** Christians to proclaim. There is no other baptism than the one which **any** Christian can bestow. There is no other remembrance of the Lord's Supper than that which **any** Christian can observe & which Christ has instituted. There is no other kind of sin than that which **any** Christian can bind or loose. There is no other sacrifice than of the body of **every** Christian. No one but a Christian can pray. No one but a Christian may judge of doctrine. **These make the priestly & royal office.** not ordination but faith

*Rom. 10:14* But how can people call for help if they don't know who to trust? And how can they know who to trust if they haven't heard of the One who can be trusted? And how can they hear if nobody tells them?

We are called by our baptism into the death/rez of Christ/called to be attentive - responsive - devoted to the God who has chosen us for God's purposes & in that attentiveness – responsiveness - devotion God's word will make itself heard <sup>w/in</sup> us & God's presence will be experienced through us.

But like we have noted so many times...Upon hearing this 4-fold claim of God on his life (*knew you/formed you/set you apart/appointed you*) Jeremiah of course tells God why this call is just not for him. **O** Sovereign Lord," I said, "I can't speak for you! I'm too young!" We reflect on this often: Moses says No 5X. Gideon demands proof 2X. Barak says he won't go <sup>w/o</sup> Deborah. Jonah runs away. You see the pattern here? I feel right at home in all of that. Lady has a vision of me standing next to Jesus & I threw it in the garbage...completely ignored it...& suffered some because of it...that's another sermon...But those whom God calls, **God** equips... Those whom God calls, God equips...God calls from eternity & equips for the moment.

**The** Lord replied, "Don't say, 'I'm too young,' for you must go wherever I send you & say whatever I tell you. And don't be afraid of the people, for I will be with you & will protect you. I, the Lord, have spoken!" Then the Lord reached out & touched my mouth & said, "Look, I have put my words in your mouth! Today I appoint you to stand up against nations & kingdoms. Some you must uproot & tear down, destroy & overthrow. Others you must build up & plant." How is Jeremiah equipped? 1<sup>st</sup> – God's presence & protection. Jeremiah will be attacked. He will be imprisoned by his own king. He will suffer mockery/abuse from those who reject his word from God for ≈ 40 yrs...until he sees Jerusalem destroyed; overthrown in military destruction...1000s killed & 1000s more taken as captives to Babylon. But he survives when those who mocked/attacked him do not. 2<sup>nd</sup> – the physical touch of God...Too many in today's church make too little of the sacraments...baptism & the Lord's Supper...but in both God touches each of us to plant his love life Spirit presence promises & power in us so they become active through us. Jeremiah will speak for God at one point saying **I** will put my word deep within them, & I will write it on their hearts. I will be their God, & they will be my people." – Jer 31:33 God always works <sup>w/in</sup> us in profoundly personal & deeply intimate ways. There is no hidden corner of our lives that the Father ignores when he claims us as his own & equips us for his mission in this world. It's all his & all for him.

**NB** speaking for God often...maybe more often than we enjoy...is a word "against." **Today** I appoint you to stand up against nations & kingdoms...You will stand against the whole land — the kings, officials, priests, & people of Judah. He is told his preaching **will** uproot & tear down, destroy & overthrow. Build up & plant? Yes... But most of his preaching is "against." The bulk of what he must say is akin to the Dr who is summoned too late...who sees the disease has spread beyond all cure.

God calls...God equips...but more importantly...**God** fulfills. **Then** the Lord said to me, "Look, Jeremiah! What do you see?" I replied, "I see a branch from an almond tree." The Lord said, "That's right, & it means that I am watching, & I will certainly carry out all my plans." The almond in Israel is the 1<sup>st</sup> to flower & the last to fruit. God is explicit...reminding Jeremiah that God has all the time he needs to bring his plan to its fullness. His nation in rebellion will be destroyed by their idolatry & by their abandoning their relationship <sup>w/</sup> Him. He will bring his promises to fulfillment including his ultimate promise to restore...to eventually write a new covenant that sin cannot annul & death cannot overthrow. God is responsible for His Word. Jeremiah...you...me...we're simply the voice through which God speaks.

I love God's promise: vs 17 **Do** not be afraid of them or I will make you look foolish in front of them We know...once we give into a fear/anxiety...it's bigger the next time. But then: **I** have made you strong like a fortified city/bronze wall/iron pillar they will fight you but they will fail. God assures us we can live in reaction to the opposition or responsive to Him but only obedient to the Father is there strength boldness hope assurance...Paul would write: **Just** one thing: Live your lives in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come & see you again or only hear about you, I will know that you are standing together with one spirit & one purpose, fighting together for the faith, which is the Good News. Don't be intimidated in any way by your enemies. This will be a sign to them that they are going to be destroyed, but that you are going to be saved, even by God himself. – Php 1:27-28 God calls...God equips...but more importantly...God fulfills God's call for you may not always be that dramatic, & like Jeremiah's may not be easy or particularly fruitful from your perspective, but your faithful obedience & willingness to be used by God in spite of what you see as obstacles may be just what God desires at this moment. Christianity...following Jesus has never been a spectator sport. God calls us to be all in. Involved. Devoted. Fully committed to him. Fully invested in the communities he loves. Fully engaged in bringing his life & hope where we live. God calls from eternity and equips for the moment.

#### **TAKE IT HOME –**

To what have you heard God calling you today?

How will you pursue that this week?

Let's pray <sup>w/</sup> that in mind...*Heavenly Father be our strength & our assurance; the only voice we hear & the only word we speak. Lord Christ Jesus be our fountain of living water & the quenching we offer for the world's thirst. Holy Spirit raise us to living obedience & unfailing witness in the places we spend our days & to the people who fill them...We ask this in Jesus' Name...Amen.*