

Jeremiah 1:4-10 ⁴ Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying: ⁵ "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; Before you were born I sanctified you; I ordained you a prophet to the nations." ⁶ Then said I: "Ah, Lord GOD! Behold, I cannot speak, for I am a youth." ⁷ But the LORD said to me: "Do not say, 'I am a youth,' For you shall go to all to whom I send you, And whatever I command you, you shall speak. ⁸ Do not be afraid of their faces, For I am with you to deliver you," says the LORD. ⁹ Then the LORD put forth His hand and touched my mouth, and the LORD said to me: "Behold, I have put My words in your mouth. ¹⁰ See, I have this day set you over the nations and over the kingdoms, To root out and to pull down, To destroy and to throw down, To build and to plant." Who knows you best? Who is that person who could finish your sentences? Who is it that would you trust to order for you at a restaurant? Who know the details of your life that no one else must ever know? Is it your mother or father? Is it your spouse or boyfriend or girlfriend? Is it a brother or a sister? Is it simply your dearest of friends?

Whoever that person is, I have a couple of questions about them. Do they know how many hairs are on your head? Do they know exactly what you were meant to do on this earth? And besides that, how long have they really known you? A couple years? Maybe ten years, maybe even 50 or 60, or more? But, did they know you even before you were born? I assume not. But God did. He knew you before you were even in the womb. And since He knows you that intimately, He does know exactly why you are here on this earth. Yes, God, better than anyone else, knows you. He knows you even better than you know yourself.

This comforting message is what we seek to relearn today as we hear God telling Jeremiah the prophet these same things when He was first called into the prophecy business. You see, Jeremiah, at the time, was too young to even discuss publicly the things of God with the other men of his community. And then all of a sudden, God was calling Him to be a prophet. Could God really be serious? He was. He told Jeremiah that he had been set aside for the task of prophecy even before he was born. That knowledge must have been impressive to Jeremiah, but he still questioned whether he was up to the task of being a prophet. But God assured him that he was ready for this task by assuring him of three things: God knew him, God had set him apart, and God would go with him. Those truths were the things that sustained Jeremiah throughout his

ministry as a prophet. From the Scriptures, we know that Jeremiah had one of the toughest runs at being prophet of about anyone, and that is saying something. He is often called the weeping prophet because he was called to deliver time after time a message of judgment. And just like today, people tend to dislike people who bring them a message of judgment. No, Jeremiah's life was not an easy one. He was reviled, he was beaten, he was threatened with death. But this was his calling. And as he knew right from his call: God knew him, God set him apart and God went with him. And that was enough to make it through whatever might come.

We too need today to be reminded of the same three facts that Jeremiah was reminded of in his call. First, God knows us better than anyone else. Have you ever truly pondered the fact that God knew about you even before your parents even did? Do you truly understand that He knows you better than you even know yourself? He does and that means a lot. It means He may have things planned for you that can't even imagine yourself doing. It means that He knows exactly what you can handle. It means that He knows how to order your entire life.

Secondly, God has set you apart. No, he has not called you to be a prophet, king or something like that. But he has called you specific callings in life. God does his work not only through prophet-types, but also through regular everyday people. What has God set you apart to do? Well, there may be many things that God has planned for you to do later in your life. But that is not really where your focus should be. There are many things that you should already understand that you are called to do. The places where you find yourself today are the places where God has called you to be, to live, and to act. If you are a mother or father, God has set you apart for that task. If you are a farmer or a baker, God has set you aside for that task. If you are on the school board or a church board, God has called you to that task. Jeremiah was called specifically to deliver a message of grace and forgiveness to God's people. Most of you have been called to carry out callings that help God accomplish the many other tasks He performs each day. God not only works for the salvation of humanity but also is a God who provides all our needs. Through some of you, God provides for the physical needs of those

around you. For others of you, he provides order in the world through you and your work. Through others of you, He raises up godly families. To God the baker and the preacher both have a task set aside for them to do and it is just as important that both get done. So whether you are Jeremiah the prophet or Joe the farmer, God has set you apart to do certain tasks through which he works his loving ways to all people.

The final truth that Jeremiah learned is also very important for us to remember as well: whatever you calling or task is, God has promised to go with you into that task. If God has called to you to raise children, He is there with you as you teach, as you discipline, and yes even as change diapers. If you are called to work in a professional field He is there with you throughout your phone calls, your paperwork, and your dealing with clients. If you are called to work the land, He is there as you plant, as your harvest and you feed the cattle. Wherever God has placed you, He has also placed himself.

Yes, what Jeremiah was reminded of at his call, you too today have been reminded. God knows you. He knows you better than anyone else. He has set you apart for task that he considers of great importance. And he goes with you as you accomplish those tasks.

The real danger for us is if we question or forget any of those truths. If we forget that God knows us best we can quickly lose sight of the fact that His plans for our lives are better than the things we might come up with for ourselves. If we forget that our ordinary lives are part of God's extraordinary ways to take care of his creature, our jobs can quickly lose any real meaning, becoming things we just have to do, rather than things we are blessed to do. And if we forget that God goes with us into those various tasks to which He has called us we quickly can become exhausted, disgusted, and feel very alone.

Today we once again admit to our Lord that we have at times in our lives forgotten those three simple truths about our lives that He wants us to know. And thankfully as always when we admit our faults before God, He forgives them again because of Jesus and His death on the cross. Yes today God forgives you, and speaks again directly to you as He spoke to Jeremiah many years ago. Whatever your calling in life, God says

to you today. I know you. I set you apart for that calling, and I go with you each day into that calling. What great comfort it is indeed to know that God makes our even the most ordinary parts of our lives part of His extraordinary ways. Today we are able to leave here rejoicing in the places where God has placed us to serve knowing that our work is not in vain. Amen.