

Fourth Sunday after Epiphany
Sermon Text: Jeremiah 1:4-10
Date Preached: Jan. 31, 2010

Grace to you and peace from God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

One of our newer beloved hymns is “Borning Cry”. In the course of that hymn one can picture God singing or saying those very words to troubled children much as a mother or father tries to soothe the fears of their children.

The scripture passages for this day stretch the message of God even further. Consider if you will the word of the Lord as it comes to the prophet Jeremiah. “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you;”

This is Jeremiah’s call to serve God. How do you say no to God when he says that before I was conceived there was a purpose for my life? You’d think it would be difficult. From Jeremiah’s perspective, doing what God asks of him certainly is difficult.

“I am only a boy.” Who am I to do this work? How many of us when faced with a call from God have come up with reasons why we cannot say “Yes”? Of course, it may be hard for us to recognize that God is

calling us to a specific vocation or ministry. I think we far too frequently speak the language of God's call solely to the ordained.

While God does indeed call some to the office of Word and Sacrament, God's call also extends well beyond that. I tend to believe that all of us have been called by God. Such call can be to a specific ministry. Some are called to be part of rebuilding efforts in areas damaged by natural disaster. People from across our synod have answered God's call to meet the needs of brothers and sisters in Christ along the gulf coast, among them Wayne Miller and Emilie Dneaster.

In the midst of discerning God's call upon us, it is not uncommon to have doubts or to be hesitant. Often is the time when we may feel completely unworthy or unqualified for what is being asked of us.

Yet God doesn't take our "no" for an answer. Calls from God are accompanied with his equipping grace. It is a grace that says to us "I will give you what you need." It is also a grace that comes to us in the promise of his presence.

That was God's response to Jeremiah. "Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you, ...Now, I have put my words in your mouth".

God equips Jeremiah for his role as a prophet. God promises to be with Jeremiah. God also equips and promises to be with us. And this isn't the most significant thing God does for us.

Long before our conception, God's value of us was sealed in blood. God's value of us is so great that nothing stands in the way of God and his children. God's love for us is so deep that he tastes the bitter hurt of loss.

God the Father watches his son, wearied by betrayal, physical torture, human mocking, close his eyes in death. The sting of death hits home to God.

The story however doesn't end in the cold, darkness of a grave. Rather, God is there as he has always been with just one more surprise. It is the surprise of resurrection. In that surprise all that Jesus did among his disciples makes sense. There is new life. Death is not the end.

Our calling in life is to share this good news. The specifics of how we do that God has beautifully

arranged in such a way that we each have a voice to contribute to the telling of the story. Some of us answer the call of God to tell this story in our service to one another. Some of us answer the call of God to tell this story through advocacy on behalf of those who are powerless.

Some of us answer the call of God to tell this story through music, art, poetry, medicine, and many of the calls that go unnoticed or are out of the range of the spotlight.

Each one of us is called to love. We are created out of the loving handiwork of God's Word. We are redeemed through the loving sacrifice of Christ our Lord.

God's call upon us is a call to love. In the specifics of living out that call we may experience success or failure in big and small ways. In the joys and struggles of fulfilling our call God meets us.

God not only calls but continues to equip us for loving service. It is a service that proclaims God's love that there is new life for the believer.

And when our work is done, our last breathe exhaled, the busy world is hushed, and the casket is closed,

this we experience by faith; “I’ll be there as I have always been, with just one more surprise.” It is the breath taking surprise of everlasting life. AMEN.