**YES, EVEN YOU ARE CALLED BY GOD**

by

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January 30, 2022 (New Life MCC)

Scripture - Jeremiah 1:4-10

Jeremiah is one of the major prophets of the Old Testament and his name means 'Jehovah lifts up'. What an appropriate name for a man who lifted up Judah to God in their sin. History tells us that Jeremiah lived in the 6th century B.C. and prophesied to the Kingdom of Judah regarding their upcoming fall and captivity.

Jeremiah was called to be a prophet around 627 B.C. when he was only 20 years old and served as a faithful prophet of God for close to 60 years. The Old Testament Scripture in the Book of Jeremiah is the story of that call. Today I want us to look closely at the story of Jeremiah's call. For I believe it reflects four important characteristics of God's call to him and also God's call to us. You see, all of us are called by God. Society labels persons set aside in ordained ministries as being "called" but they do not acknowledge that all of God's people are "called". Yes, even you are called by God. It's this calling of God that I want us to focus on today.

Now the four characteristics of God's call as reflected in Jeremiah's call are the following:

 1. God has a master plan for our life even before we were born.

 2. Responding to God's call allows us to become what God wants us to be.

 3. God provides the means for us to follow our call.

 4. When we accept God's call, we cannot remain silent.

Let's look at each of these characteristics in more detail.

1. God has a master plan for our life even before we were born.

Jeremiah 1:5 says, "Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you and before you were born, I consecrated you." God is saying to Jeremiah here 'I created you Jeremiah and, before there was a Jeremiah, I knew who he would be and what he would do and what his gifts and graces would be.'

The Hebrew word 'yada' translated here as 'knew' has many meanings in the Old Testament. Here in Jeremiah however it means 'to have intimate knowledge of'. God truly knew Jeremiah because God created him. God truly knows us because God created us. Even before Jeremiah was born God had intimate knowledge of Jeremiah. And just like Jeremiah, God has intimate knowledge of us.

The Creator has given us gifts and graces that are special for each of us. Others may also have the same gifts and graces but each person is called to use them for a special purpose. The process of being 'set apart' for a special purpose is called consecration. Jeremiah was consecrated, that is 'set apart' as a prophet to use his gifts and graces. He was called to tell the Jews in Jerusalem that their nation would fall because of their sin and they would be in captivity for 70 years. Each of us, too, are consecrated and 'set apart' to use our gifts and graces. We may not be prophets but we too are called by God so our special purpose is no less important. Yes, even you are called by God.

2. Responding to God's call allows us to become what God wants us to be.

We've said Jeremiah was called by God to be a prophet to Judah. Jeremiah however was reluctant and gave God the excuses that he was too young and didn't know how to speak. However, God put the words in his mouth, Jeremiah responded, and became what God wanted him to be.

Another reluctant prophet was Moses. Remember in Exodus Chapters 3 and 4 God called Moses from the burning bush to go lead the Hebrews out of bondage in Egypt. Instead of saying 'yes, Lord I will go', Moses gave God all kinds of excuses:

1. 'Who am I that I should go'. In other words, 'God you can find someone else better fitted than me. I'm a nobody. I'm only a shepherd'. But God said “I will be with you”.
2. 'They will not believe me and will say you didn't send me'. But God said “I will give you signs so you they will know you were sent by me”.
3. 'Lord, I am not eloquent. I am slow of speech.' In other words, 'I can't speak to pharaoh. My tongue gets tangled and all tied up'. But God said “I will be your mouth”.
4. 'Lord, send someone else'. In other words, 'I just don't want to go'. But God said “I will send your brother Aaron with you who will speak for you and I will give him the words to say”.

For every excuse Jeremiah and Moses gave God, God had an answer. God said to both of them 'Trust me. You are the ones I want. I have called you to serve me.’ When they both realized God knew what was best for them and they allowed themselves to surrender to God's will, then and only then, did they truly experience God's call.

Brothers and sisters, we are no different than Jeremiah and Moses. Have you ever thought or said the following:

1. No. I can't do that. I'm not good enough. I'm only a homemaker. I'm only a common man.

 2. No. I hate to make speeches and besides I don't feel comfortable talking in front of people. Someone else would do better at that than me. I never can say the right words.

3. No. I don't have enough experience to do that. Someone else with experience would do much better than me.

 4. No. They wouldn't believe me anyway. I'm just a nobody. Pick someone else that people would believe.

 5. No. I just don't want to do it.

Being honest, I have to say I have said some of those statements to God in reference to my calling. And if you're honest, you too would admit to having said some of them before when you were asked to do something you felt inadequate or unqualified to do.

Maybe it was at church----or maybe it was at work----or maybe it was at school. Many times, those opportunities are God's call to us to trust our Creator step out on faith and let God use us. Remember Paul's statement to the Corinthians in 2 Corinthians 12:10 when he said, "For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions and calamities; for when I am weak, then I am strong."

Paul stepped out on faith and put himself in situations where he was weak and felt uncomfortable. And said in those situations was when he was really strong. He was strong because he had to trust God and not himself. He was accepting his call to serve. We, too, are strong when we are weak. God calls us to serve our Creator in our weakness. Yes, even you are called by God.

3. God provides the means for us to do His will.

Jeremiah gave excuses to God but God said in Jeremiah 1:8-9,” Be not afraid of them for I am with you to deliver you. Behold I have put my words in your mouth". God provided the means for Jeremiah to complete his call.

Moses gave God excuses but God said

 …in Exodus 3, v.12 "But I will be with you"

 …in Exodus 3, v.14 "Say this to the people of Israel 'I am' has sent me to you".

 …in Exodus 4 God gave Moses signs to prove God had sent him including the rod that would change into a serpent when cast on the ground.

 …in Exodus.4, v.1 "Therefore go and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall speak".

When Jesus told the disciples He was going to die and leave them, they became afraid. But He also told them, in John 14:15-18, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will pray the Parent who will give you another Counselor, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of Truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees it nor knows it, for it dwells with you, and will be in you. I will not leave you desolate."

When God calls us, God provides the means for us to do what we are called to do. God provided the Holy Spirit for the disciples to the job they were called to do. God provides the Holy Spirit for you and me to do the same. Yes, even you are called by God.

4. When we accept God's call, we cannot remain silent.

1. When Jeremiah accepted God's call, he went forward into Judah and spoke boldly for God.
2. When Moses accepted God's call, he went forward into Egypt and spoke boldly for God.
3. When the Apostle Paul's life was changed on the road to Damascus and he accepted God's call to tell the Good News to the Gentiles, he went forward into Asia Minor and spoke boldly for Christ.

When the disciples accepted their call and commission to preach the Gospel to all the lands and after receiving the Holy Spirit on Pentecost, they went forward into the known world and spoke boldly for Christ.

Again, I say we are no different than they. Many times, we look at the characters of the Bible as 'bigger than life', that is 'bigger and better than we are'. True, they are examples of people who did great things for God and Christ which we should emulate. But they are-people just like you and me. They were weak and frail. They were unsure and afraid. The beautiful part of their stories is how they overcame weakness, frailty, insecurity and fear, by trusting God and became obedient servants to their calls.

Brothers and sisters, God has called each of us in a special way: God has called us to serve in the church with the special gifts given to us. When was the last time you visited sick and shut-ins? When was the last time you did something special for another member of the church family with only you and God knowing you've done it? God has called us to serve with gifts of love and understanding to all people. Is our life the Christian example that everyone who knows us and sees us needs to see?

God has called us to serve in our jobs. For many people we work with, we may be the only Jesus or Bible they will ever see. God puts us in our jobs to be witnesses for our Creator. Is there someone at work you need to share Jesus with? Don't be afraid. Remember, Jesus promised 'I will not leave you desolate'.

God has called us to serve in our community. There are many who need us. They are lonely, disadvantaged and lost. God has blessed us so abundantly and provided us with opportunities to share those blessings with others. When was the last time you reached out to someone you didn't know and shared Jesus' love with them?

God's call to serve is for all humanity, young and old. Yes, even you are called by God.

In Jesus Name. Amen.