

“God is the DJ”
Jeremiah 1:4-10

I want to open today by quoting pop singer, Pink, because I think the chorus to one of her songs summarizes our reading in Jeremiah today surprisingly well. She sings, “God is the DJ, life is a dance floor, Love is the rhythm, you are the music. You get what you’re given, it’s all how you use it. “

I like it because it actually manages to balance a theology of free will with God’s calling, God’s plans for us, and reminds us that both can be happening at the same time. God may be choosing the music, but it is done in love, and we get to choose exactly what we’ll do with it—we choose how it will be expressed in our lives.

Jeremiah was chosen and called by God at a young age - scholars believe he was in his early twenties or so. And his calling came around 627 BC during a time of political and religious upheaval for Israel. At first, Jeremiah is not at all sure about following God’s call to be a prophet. He is full of fear and he protests saying, “I don’t know how to speak, I’m only a boy.” Of course, God is not concerned about his age – God assures Jeremiah, “Do not be afraid, I am with you to deliver you.” God’s call is always based in love and God is always there to help us live it out.

We also read in these opening words of Jeremiah that God has not only called the prophet but knows him intimately and formed him from the very beginning. The Hebrew word being used here when God says, “Before I formed you...I knew you” is a word that means to make and mold or shape – the way a potter shapes clay. It’s the same word used when God creates Adam in Genesis out of the clay—like soil of the earth. There is a sense of purpose here – that God created and shaped Jeremiah to be exactly who he is.

We may not be prophets like Jeremiah, but we too have been created, formed and shaped by God. We are also all called by God --each one of us is called. Our stories will differ, but the calling upon each of us is always there, from our very beginning. We have all been called to be children of God and to live according to the purposes and plans God has for each one of us. But we choose how we live that plan out. We can also choose to go in another direction. We can even choose a very different, even damaging path for ourselves. But often

the bigger problem is simply that we don’t stop to ask and pray and lean on God’s leading and calling on our lives, and when we don’t do that, we can simply miss out on the life God has for us – a life full of deep purpose and meaning. And so we often, as people, settle- we settle for a life less than God dreams for us to have. We sit out from the dance because we don’t like the music the DJ is playing or because we’re too fearful or angry or hurt or just not paying attention or listening to the music.

God calls all of us in different ways. I would describe the calling of God in our lives in four categories. The first category is the broadest sense of call: it’s simply the call to give one’s life to God – to live as the child of God you have been created to be. The second category of calling is related to life’s major decisions: our vocations or careers, the decision to become a parent or not, the major relationships in our lives, etc. Those can all be callings. And I have always appreciated Frederick Buechner’s description of vocation when he writes: “The place where God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world’s deep hunger coincide.” And yet, we remember, according to Scripture, what matters even more than what we do, is how we do it. More important than becoming a doctor or lawyer or teacher or homemaker, or mother or father, is what kind of doctor or lawyer or teacher or homemaker or mother or father we are. Because the main call on our lives will always go back to the first and original calling: to be the person God has formed and created us to be. So, while we want to find a good fit for our unique gifts and talents- to match our joy with the world’s needs, the more important question is always going to be: Who are you called to be?

The third category of God’s call on our lives these is related to the seasons of our lives –like the ways God might have us serve or minister or focus our time and energy at any given point in life. It may even be a call to work on something on ourselves in order to find healing and wholeness in some way. This relates to one of my favorite sayings, “God loves you just the way you are. But God loves you too much to leave you that way.” We are called to continually grow as people...to be transformed into Christ’s likeness, and different seasons of our lives invite us into different points of focus for our time and energy. What is God teaching you or inviting you into right now, in this season of your life?

Finally, there is the fourth category- these are the moment to moment calls from God-- calls to specific actions or even thoughts in a given moment that may come to us in the form of an inner nudging or feeling or inspiration. "Go there." "Call so and so." "Give that hungry person something to eat" "Paint this." "Say that." "Go talk to her, she looks lonely" and so on. I believe these little invitations, little callings, are happening all the time when we're open and listening. So- if you ask me if God calls people today, my answer is "Absolutely yes - all the time, in big and little ways." And Jeremiah is an example to us of what that looks like in one unique instance.

The story is told by the Rev. Tim Burt of a pastor from a church called the Almighty God Tabernacle. One Saturday night the pastor was working late and called home to tell his wife he would be leaving soon. The phone rang and rang but she never picked up. He called again a little later and this time she picked up but said she hadn't heard the phone ring earlier when he asked. The next week the pastor was in his office at the church and his phone rang. The caller asked him why he had called him last Saturday night. The pastor said he didn't know what he was talking about until the caller said, "It rang and rang but I didn't answer." Suddenly the pastor realized he must have dialed a wrong number and said, "I'm sorry, I was just trying to reach my wife." The caller responded, "That's okay, because I was sitting at home in total despair, feeling suicidal, and prayed to God to give me a sign...and then my phone rang, and the Caller ID said, "Almighty God" and I was too scared to answer it.

God is always calling us. And honestly, I have been told so many stories like this one over the years – of events occurring that, for the person who experienced it, it was clear that God had been involved...that God had reached out and called them or rescued them or lead them in the right direction, just as God promised to do for Jeremiah.

We are all called by God. Every one of us, according to God's purposes for us. What are God's purposes for you? We can always ask God for clarity and guidance if we're not sure.

I personally struggled a lot with my own sense of call. And sometimes I still do. Years ago, as a young adult I was urged to go to seminary by close friends and several clergy members, but I was deeply unsure of

myself and doubted my abilities. I still do at times. I was about to graduate with my Bachelor's degree and I began to pray and I told God (and I quote) "Hit me over the head with a clear sign if you're calling me to go to seminary, otherwise I won't go." A week after that prayer I felt a tap on my shoulder. I turned around and a woman introduced herself to me as the Admissions Director of a mainline seminary in the Midwest. She asked if we could talk. We sat down and she said, "I'm here to find our Presidential Scholar. After meeting with your Department, our seminary is prepared to offer it to you – it will cover all your tuition, room, and board, plus a small stipend." I said, "You mean you would basically pay me to go to seminary?" "Yeah." she said. I took that as my sign to go to seminary – and I can't tell you how grateful I am that I did.

Sometimes God's call is so clear. At other times we have to wait and seek it out for a while. But God is always calling us and wants us to know the plans God has for us.

God has formed each of us to be the people we are meant to be. God is always calling us to step out on to the dance floor of life and follow that call into a more meaningful and purposeful life. You're never too young and you're never too old to start asking and listening for the big and little calls of God in your life- and to find your unique rhythm...and dance with God.