

God's Calling — Jeremiah 1:4-10

There's an old story about the farmer who was out in his field working. After a few hours, he stopped what he was doing to stretch his back, and he saw that the clouds had made a perfect formation of the letters PC. Immediately, he decided that God was telling him to "Preach Christ." So he sold the farm, spent years in seminary and in due time reached his first pastorate. The parishioners in that congregation were patient and long suffering, until finally they couldn't stand it any longer. The man was disorganized in his worship leadership, scattered and labouriously drawn-out in his delivery of the message and, in a word, boring! Ultimately, one of the members, "appointed" by the others, approached the minister. He asked what had made the man think that he should be a minister. And the man described the clouds' formation into the letters, PC, which he interpreted to mean Preach Christ. "Ahhh," the parishioner pondered, "You don't suppose the Lord was suggesting you should Plant Corn, do you?"



Jeremiah was a youth when God called him to be a prophet, and to say that he was reluctant is a gross understatement. You see, God calls Jeremiah at a time when the Israelites were in deep trouble, on the brink of total disintegration, brought about by erosion from within, engendered by a people who had forgotten that it was God who had led them out of bondage, led them to the promised land, blessed them with strength and abundance. The chosen people had long since grown to believe that what they had was brought about through their own power and deservedness. Forgetting God, they worshipped many idols, including their image of themselves as self-made. As they became more and more an empty shell of a nation, a nation with only a thin veneer of strength and power, their political enemies began circling, sensing that the once commanding nation of Israel was ripe for the picking.

Into this situation, and out of infinite love for these chosen people, God calls Jeremiah. God will not rest idly by, watching Israel be destroyed. Instead God elects to work through Jeremiah to call the people back to himself.

Out of infinite love, through the ages, God reaches out for God's created, for nations and peoples, for individuals, young and not as young. With all the longing of a parent for a child God longs to shower God's creation with blessings – peace and abundance, wonder and hope, joy and delight, meaning and purpose.

I encourage you to listen for God's voice, as you go along, in the things you do, the people whose paths intersect with yours. Even though God may not speak to us directly, as he did long ago with the prophets, God still speaks. If we train ourselves to be attentive, to pay attention, we will discover that God communicates with us in many ways – through so called coincidences, [by the way, someone once said that coincidences are God's way of remaining anonymous], through "chance" remarks of friends and strangers, through victories and even through what appears to be failures.

God calls every one of us, holds in God's heart a dream, a plan for our lives – communally and individually. It isn't just ministers, prophets and priests that are called to special service in God's world. God calls all of us to live into and up to his imagining of us and for us. God calls us to live lives of love – love that is inclusive of all peoples, all created order, all of creation.