

Faith Walk! - Sermon Discussion

Date : 11 April 2021

Sermon Title : You are Called

Speaker : Rev Eddie Ho

Text : Jeremiah 1:4-10

INTRODUCTION

The historical background and context of the book of Jeremiah can be summarized with one word – covenant. The people of Israel had a covenant with God. A covenant is essentially a vow that two parties make to commit to be faithful to one another, carrying out their parts spelt out in the agreement of the vow, very much like a husband and wife's marriage vow. The Israelites were required to love God and to keep His laws and in return, God will bless them with good life. (Deuteronomy 30:15-18) How did the Israelites fare?

Around 930 BC, the people of Israel were split into two kingdoms: Israel in the north and Judah in the south. Both kingdoms were not faithful. They repeatedly broke the covenant, turned to idolatry and betrayed God. But God still loved them. Despite them repeatedly breaking the covenant, God repeatedly sent prophets to woo them back but they repeatedly ignored God's prophets. In fact, they often persecuted the prophets and sometimes killed them. In 721 BC, judgement fell upon the northern kingdom, Israel – they were destroyed by the Assyrian empire.

The book of Jeremiah tells the story of the last generation of the southern kingdom, Judah.

God's call to Jeremiah (Jeremiah 1:4-10)

This was a specific call by God for a specific individual, Jeremiah, to a specific role as a prophet, to a specific group of people Judah, in a specific time in history (around 550-600 BC) under a specific term in the Old Testament. Yet, there are at least 2 reasons why Jeremiah's call applies to Christians living in the 21st century, who are not under the law of the old covenant, but under grace of Jesus Christ:

1. There is something about Jeremiah in the Old Testament that God wants to teach us in the modern world, to take and to apply in our own calling and lives. (2 Timothy 3:16)
2. A pivotal prophecy which is a game changer is given to Jeremiah. God is going to make a new covenant. (Jeremiah 31:31-34) During the old covenant, God's

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Faith Walk! - Sermon Discussion

modus operandi was to send His Spirit to specific individuals to be His spokesman, like how God spoke to Moses at the burning bush. These specific individuals were anointed by God to convey His will to the people. People can only know God's law and will through them. But this prophesy says, God is going to do something new - under this new covenant, God will pour His Spirit on every one of His children. Each of them will be like the prophets in the Old Testament.

God's call for us

When does life begin?

In Jeremiah 1:5, God says – before I formed you in the womb, I *knew* you, and before you were born, I *consecrated* you; I *appointed you a prophet* to the nations.”

- God wants us to know that even before we were born, we were already in His mind. He knew us and we are precious to Him.
- He has a purpose for us. Before we were born, God has already set us apart (consecrated) to be a prophet to the nations.

Although not everyone is called to be an authoritative prophet like Jeremiah, yet every believer is called to be a part of God's prophetic ministry:

- Paul told us to eagerly desire the gifts of the Spirit, especially prophecy, because the one who prophesies speaks to people for their strengthening, encouraging and comfort. All of us are called to edify the body of Christ. (1 Corinthians 14:1-4)
- The prophetic ministry is not so much about fortune telling, but forth telling – to be God's spokesperson. When we see injustice, we speak and help out on God's behalf. When we see areas of need, we mobilize and contribute on God's behalf. When we see evil-doings, we call them out and pray for repentance.

All of us are called to be in God's prophetic ministry, where Jesus Christ is the chief prophet. God is calling us to be His voice and His hands.

How should we respond to God's call for us?

God reminds us not to use our lack of age and experience (Jeremiah 1:6-7) or any other reasons as excuse. God knows what He is doing even if we do not.

God wants us to look at Jeremiah's life as God's messenger:

- As God's mouthpiece, Jeremiah was to tell the people to remember the covenant and to turn back to God. But throughout his life, he was persecuted for his message. He constantly received death threats. (Chapter 26, 37) He was whipped, shackled, chained in the temple ground (Chapter 20) and was

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Faith Walk! - Sermon Discussion

even accused of treason, desertion and arrested. (Chapter 38) He was also thrown into the deep mud in a cistern. (Chapter 38)

- Because of his calling, Jeremiah was shunned by people and did not have many friends. He led a very lonely life, and was even forbidden by God to marry and have children. (Chapter 16) He had terrible relatives and a cousin who took advantage of him at his lowest point (in prison) by asking Jeremiah to buy over his property when the city was about to fall into the hands of the Babylonians. (Chapter 32)
- Jeremiah watched first-hand the fall of his beloved country and his people dragged away as slaves (Chapter 16), that is why He is also known as “The Weeping Prophet”. He had such a hard life and ministry that he also wrote the book of Lamentations to pour out his anguish and pain.

Despite Jeremiah’s tragic ministry, God was never far from him (Jeremiah 1:8)

God will never be far from us even in all of our difficult circumstances. Before the world began, God already had us in His mind. He already had plans for us. He is calling us to be His spokesman. This is also the reason that Jesus came. Jesus’ blood was spilled not just for the forgiveness of our sins, but also as a seal to the new covenant that Jeremiah spoke about. After 50 days, on Pentecost, Jesus gave us His Holy Spirit to speak to each one of us and to give us His power for our calling. (Luke 21:15, Jeremiah 1:10)

CONCLUSION

All of us are called to be God’s spokesperson because we are a chosen race, a royal priesthood. Do not be afraid no matter how inadequate we feel we are, how small we think our gift or talent is, no matter how messed up we think our lives are. Let us put our faith in Jesus Christ and surrender to Him. This is the reason He came, for us. Let Him be the centre of our life. When God calls us, His presence and His power will go with us. Let us respond to God’s call individually and as a corporate body of Christ.

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Faith Walk! - Sermon Discussion

As a group, spend some time to share your success and struggle in fulfilling what you/your group had committed to do at the previous meeting.

A. Review Sermon Content

Purpose: Reflect on one key takeaway.

Appoint someone to read Jeremiah 1:4-10 twice, slowly.

1. At the end of the reading, the reader will say, ‘This is the Word of the Lord.’

All to respond, “Thanks be to God.” Our response reminds us that this is the Word of the Lord. Just as God had spoken to His people in the past, He is still speaking to us even today, right now.”

- a. As God's word was read, which verse speaks to you the most?

- b.
 - (i) What is the key takeaway for you from the sermon “You are Called”?
 - (ii) How will you align the way you live to your key takeaway?

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Faith Walk! - Sermon Discussion

B. Relate Sermon Content

Purpose: Relate with the Truth and Resolve for Transformation.

- 2a. Why is every believer called to participate in God's prophetic ministry even in the 21st century?
- (i) How does knowing this impact your view on your responsibility to speak to people for their strengthening, encouraging and comfort and to edify the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 14:1-4) and to be God's voice and hands?
- 2b. (i) From Jeremiah's example, what do you think God's prophetic ministry involves?
- (ii) What are some ways you can be God's voice and hands, as an individual and as a small group?
- 3a. How have you responded to God's call for you in His prophetic ministry?
- 3b. (i) What is one thing that hinders you from participating actively in God's prophetic ministry?
- (ii) What can you do to overcome 3b.(i) above?
- 3c. How can your group members encourage or help you to achieve 3b.(ii), in the following week(s) until your next meeting?

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Faith Walk! - Sermon Discussion

C. Testimonies and Prayer

Purpose: Give glory to God and seek Him.

4. Share your testimony on how God has called you to His prophetic ministry. Include how you were able to obey His call and what impact that obedience has on you.

OR

Give thanks to God for the prophetic ministry of someone which has strengthened, encouraged, comforted and edified you in your walk with Christ.

6. As a group discuss what have been shared in 2b(ii) on how your group can participate in God's prophetic ministry. Seek God's revelation on how this can be done in our upcoming One Mission Church Camp and pray for His leading to the pre-believers you can be His voice and hands to.

With a prayer partner, bring all that have been shared in 3a, 3b and 3c to God asking for the Holy Spirit's empowerment to persevere in helping and encouraging one another to hear and answer His call.

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