

Jeremiah is called by God  
Meditation 2021

Today it is all about young Jeremiah and God talking to him. I know you.  
And it is not only God talking to a person, it is God talking himself into somebody's life.  
Jeremiah hears it, is touched by it, tries to escape from it, and is surely reminded of so many situations in his life.

I know you.

I know who you are. I know where you come from, and where your paths will lead you. I know the places of your past and your future. "Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you."

I know your successes and your failures. I know your dark and your bright sides. I know your guilt and your courage, your dreams and your tears... and I need you.

Before you were born, I consecrated you, I appointed you. I have a job for you, a mission, a purpose in life.

Isn't that poetry to our ears?

Promising plain beautiful poetry?

I know you and I need you – spoken by nobody less than God?!

And what does Jeremiah answer?

**6 Then I said, «Ah, Lord GOD! Truly I do not know how to speak, for I am only a boy.»**

I am only...

He tries to get away without fulfilling the task God has already given to him.

**...I appointed you a prophet to the nations.»**

...a prophet to the nations, this was just too much for Jeremiah, and he says: No, thank you!

But God wouldn't be God, if he didn't immediately respond.

**Do not say, I am only a boy...**

Don't do this.

Don't say this.

You will do it... you'll go and speak –

and I will be with you.

We have heard God saying this to other great leaders. Remember Moses and the burning bush? Joshua at the river and so many others...

You'll do it!

In Jeremiah's case God goes even further. It is not only that God is with Jeremiah. God promises to provide what Jeremiah will need.

**«Now I have put my words in your mouth.**

...and he even touches him. The encounter is more than just an intellectual one. God touches... physically... raises up and strengthens – just as Jesus did in so many of his stories of healing.

It is God's touch and tenderness that eventually help Jeremiah to see beyond the burden to God's promise!

We don't hear Jeremiah express his change of mind! But obviously he lets God continue to speak and describe the mission he has chosen Jeremiah for.

**9 Then the LORD put out his hand and touched my mouth; and the LORD said to me,**

**«Now I have put my words in your mouth.**

**10 See, today I appoint you over nations and over kingdoms,**

*to pluck up and to pull down,  
to destroy and to overthrow,  
to build and to plant.»*

There is so much to do – and nothing nice and easy ...  
pluck up and pull down  
destroy and overthrow  
build and plant...

I know you, God says. You can do it!

And Jeremiah who just a few moments ago tried to talk himself out of the commitment, must somehow feel these confirming sentences of his God which embrace and cover him like a coat of promise. God will be with him. God will show him the way. God will give him words to speak – whatever happens.

If you know Jeremiah's story, you know that he's got to go through a lot.

More than any other prophet Jeremiah suffered as the mouth of God. He had to speak out God's truth; he suffered the people's disgust and disbelief. He must have wanted to tear his heart out of his body, when the terrible things he had predicted, came true. In the end Jerusalem was destroyed, the temple torn down, and Jeremiah taken a prisoner of war in his own country.

Good that he didn't know all that right from the beginning. Good that we don't always know everything right from the beginning...

"Do not be afraid, for I am with you..."

No matter what harsh things came in Jeremiah's life, he continued to be the prophet of God. Even in captivity he kept on preaching and proclaiming, encouraging others and holding fast to God's good plans for the future of his people.

God had known him, before he even formed him in the womb. And God had done well by appointing this young man who pretended to not be able to speak...

We may find it difficult to imagine the depths of Jeremiah's story with his God. But maybe some of what Jeremiah lived through is not at all far away from what we and others experience or have experienced?

What does it mean to us to be called by God, consecrated and appointed?

God's words to Jeremiah are words for us, too. Including the: do not be afraid... because I have made you and I know you.

We may never hear God's voice as clearly as Jeremiah did. But especially when we look back at our life stories, I am sure we can identify many threads that were held together by God without us noticing it...

...when you go through hell – now in this pandemic, or in terms of a relationship, your marriage, your family life, catastrophes – at the end of it all you can see that it has not only wounded and marked you, but it has also made you a survivor. You have grown strong. You learn from the experience who you are!

The same is true for illnesses, accidents, misfortunes...

God's promise to be with us, to provide what we need in life, because he has made us, called us, and appointed us, doesn't necessarily mean that we will only live on the sunny side of life! Babylon – where Jeremiah was sending words of encouragement to, to support those Israelites in captivity there – had rose gardens, but not for Jeremiah's people. Jeremiah's rose gardens were in his heart and mind, in the thoughts he shared, in the faith he held fast, and in the beautiful poetry of his famous letters with which he encouraged generations of Israelites to live and carry on!

If it is true that God knows us... that he's made us in the womb (and this is not a scientific but a philosophical statement. The question is not so much, where I come from – physically – but where I belong – emotionally).

...if it is true that God knows us and needs us, then it is also true, as it was for Jeremiah, that we can stick to God's appointment for us and fulfil our calling.

As Jeremiah had poetry, beauty, comfort and hope in his heart, we can have it, too. And as Jeremiah could share all this with others – even in the most difficult and dangerous situations – we can share it, too.

However uncertain and nervous, however disappointed and sad, however desperate and weak we feel, the "I know you", God speaks to us, wants to lift us up and make us strong – just as Jesus lifted up people and made them free.

"Do not be afraid, for I am with you. I know you; I need you"

Take this as God's personal approach to you today. Hold fast to it and discover who you are in God's eyes... and who you are meant to be. Amen.

### **Prayer**

Call us, God,

as you called Jeremiah.

Know us, God,

better than we know ourselves.

Consecrate us, appoint us and use us.

And if we try to get away without fulfilling the task you give us, forgive us & encourage us.

Put out your hand and touch us,

so that we may touch others.

Fill us with courage and wisdom

to say and do

what you want us to do.

Amen.