

Sermon: *God is Calling*
01/31/2010

The prayer that Bob O'Toole
read before our first lesson
has haunted me this week
as I have responded to a variety of needs
throughout our church family.
They have been the sometimes soft and comforting,
The sometimes hard and challenging words of my week . . .

Hear God's word—
the words of call,
the words of promise,
the words of faith,
the words of hope,
the words of love.
Live God's word—
the words of life.

Hear God's word—
The words of call . . .

Our first reading this morning was the story of the call of the prophet Jeremiah . . .
It follows the pattern of many of the call stories found in the Old Testament.

God has a job to be done . . .
And so God calls . . .
A particular person,
At a particular place,
In a particular time,
To a particular task . . .

God knows what is to be done,
And God chooses the individual who will respond to the world's need.

But God's call to Jeremiah –
As it so often it –
Meets with resistance . . .

Jeremiah says he is too young –
He says: I am only a boy . . .

How often do we meet God's call with resistance . . .
God gets it wrong . . .

God needs someone older,
someone younger,
someone more articulate,
someone with more courage,
someone with more faith.
Someone brighter,
Someone stronger

God needs someone . . . but not me . . .
Someone else!

And in Jeremiah's story God responds to Jeremiah's resistance
With God's words of promise:
you shall go to all to whom I send you,
and you shall speak whatever I command you.
Do not be afraid of them,
for I am with you to deliver you,

Do not be afraid of them,
for I am with you to deliver you,

This promise to Jeremiah
Is the same promise God makes to us
When God calls us
At a particular place,
In a particular time,
To a particular task . . .

This morning, after worship,
we will have our annual congregational meeting . . .
This morning I believe God calls us
Individually
And as a congregation
To discern what we are being called to be today . . .

There are lots of reasons we can say that God is not talking to us . . .

We are too small . . .
We are too poor . . .
We have financial difficulties . . .
Our people aren't committed . . .
It's always the same few who do most of the work . . .
If we had a different pastor . . .
If we had some new members . . .
We are just fine the way we are
What we are is all we will ever be

Which excuse . . .
Which words of resistance do you utter . . .

We're too small?
How about the church in Western Virginia that has only 115 active members –
Attendance of about 50
Who send their pastor to do humanitarian work
for 2 months out of the year with Presbyterian Peacemakers

No one told them they were too small to make a difference in the world

We're too poor?
We have financial difficulties?
How about the church that built a Sunday School wing
In the inner City –
Their first donation
57 cents . . .
No one told them they were too poor
Too financially strapped
to make a difference in their community

Our people aren't committed . . .
It's always the same few people doing all the work . . .
Why is that?
Have we asked people individually?
Do we honor the people who help?
Or do we put them on lists and just expect them to show up . . .
If our people aren't committed
Is it because we don't welcome new ideas . . .
Because we don't hear concerns that are raised . . .
What can we do to get people more committed

If we had a different pastor . . .
You know Centre has been around
More than 240 years . . .
In a few short years we'll turn 250 . . .
Let's be honest . . .
Pastors come and go –
But you the group of believers who worship
In this place are far more responsible
for the community here than any transitory pastor . . .
It's easy to just wish for a different
Or another pastor –
What are you doing right now to make a difference?

If we had some new members –

And then there are those of us
Who are sitting here thinking
There's nothing wrong with us
We're just fine the way we are . . .
Why does she want us to change . . .

And still God is calling . . .
Susan . . . Donna . . . Pete . . . Vance . . .
Deb . . . Dave . . . Ed . . .

Anna May . . . Jane . . . Mort . . .
Ray . . . Ruby . . . Judy . . .

Charlie . . . Stacy . . . Tracy . . .
Suzanne . . . Ashley . . . Sandy . . .

Ray . . . Jon . . . Bart . . .
Kelly . . . Hugh . . .

Jimmy . . . Liza . . . Faith . . .
Christa . . . Leila . . . Vanessa . . .
Grace . . . Emma . . .

God is still calling

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Remember the words of Jeremiah . . .
I am too young . . .
I am only a boy

What he was really saying was
I am too afraid . . .
Don't send me

As we begin the decade that
Holds our 250th anniversary . . .

Are we too afraid to let the Holy Spirit touch us
Are we too worried to follow Christ . . .
Are we too secure to begin to question
Where is God calling us to go
Who is God calling us to be . . .
My friends,

I call us to a year of intense discernment . . .
What do we need to do at Centre Church to respond faithfully to God . . .
What do YOU Need to do to respond more faithfully to God

Pray about it . . .
Talk about it . . .
Come see me . . .
Come see session . . .

God is calling us . . .

And as we respond
However we respond
God is saying . . .

you shall go to all to whom I send you,
and you shall speak whatever I command you.
Do not be afraid of them,
for I am with you to deliver you,

Will you pray with me?

Hear God's word—
the words of call,
the words of promise,
the words of faith,
the words of hope,
the words of love.
Live God's word—
the words of life.
Amen