



Sermon – May 13, 2018

**Verses Covered**

*Jeremiah 1:4 – 10, 17 - 19*

So it is graduation weekend, particularly for our high school students. And then we have a number of college kids heading out. So we're going to look at what the Bible says in regard to that. I want you to go to the first chapter of Jeremiah. It's really the best place to understand what the purpose is for our life. Particularly when we leave home. What does it mean? What does it entail? What does it involve? So we're going to look at what God said to Jeremiah because it's true for every one of us. Now we're going to start in verse four. First few verses simply talk about Jeremiah and where he's from, what he's involved, the span of his lifetime. Now listen carefully to what scripture says.

<sup>4</sup>Now the word of the Lord came to me saying, <sup>5</sup>“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations.”  
<sup>6</sup>Then I said, “Ah, Lord God! Behold, I do not know how to speak. I'm only a youth.”  
<sup>7</sup>But the Lord said to me, “Do not say, ‘I am only a youth,’ for to all that I send you, you shall go, whatever I command you, you shall speak, <sup>8</sup>Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you,” declares the Lord. <sup>9</sup>Then the Lord put out His hand and He touched my mouth, and the Lord said to me, “Behold, I have put My words in your mouth.  
<sup>10</sup>And see, I have set you this day over nations, kingdoms, to pluck up, break down, destroy, overthrow, build, and plant.”

Then then look down at verse 17.

<sup>17</sup>“But you, dress yourself for work, arise and say to them everything that I command you. Do not be dismayed by them, lest I dismay you before them. <sup>18</sup>Now behold, I make you this day a fortified city, an iron pillar, bronze walls against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, its officials, its priests, and the people of the land. <sup>19</sup>They will fight against you, but they shall not prevail against you, for I am with you,” declares the Lord, “to deliver you.”

That is the truth for these that are graduating and it is the truth for all of us in this room. Before you're born, He has a job and a purpose for you to perform on this planet. Based on Psalm 139,

He's got a certain number of days, that He gives you that He doesn't tell you, to live out that purpose. But He has a job and a purpose for every single person born. And He puts that on their life before you're even knit together in the womb. And it doesn't matter how you appear in the womb. It doesn't matter. What I'm going to share with you is public knowledge so I'm not breaking any confidence. As a matter of fact, it's been shared publicly on a number of occasions. I remember a few years back, I got a call from a lady in my church in Midland. And she said, "Listen I need you to help me with something." Her son who was in the ministry, a pastor, she said, "He's really struggling because his dad won't spend any time with him and he's trying to figure out what he did and where's his failure and what has he done wrong that his dad doesn't value him enough and doesn't want to spend any time with him." I said, "What am I supposed to say? I don't know." And she said, "You don't know the story, do you?" I said, "Apparently not." She said, "I was assaulted intimately as a young girl. Became pregnant and this man that wasn't the assaulter married me so that he would cover that up for me. And so James thinks this is his dad when in fact it's not."

Now I tell you that story because there are two things that are salient about it. It wasn't her choice to get pregnant; a man assaulted her. And yet that son out of that was called to preach because it doesn't matter how a child is formed in the womb. If God allows the forming, He has a purpose for that formation. So before you're born He has something for you to do. Number two. He will, as He does there, verse 4.

<sup>4</sup>Now the word of the Lord came to me saying,

He doesn't tell Jeremiah at birth. Jeremiah's a youth. We don't know what that means. Maybe a teenager. But as a teenager, God comes to Him and speaks to Him and says, "Look here's what I have for you to do." And at some point, God will reveal to you what that purpose is. Now I don't know how He's going to do it. It doesn't really matter. In my case it was a very violent, one night, quick, three-minute moment where I actually heard God speak in my mind. And then my best friend in seminary, we were discussing out calls one day. He grew up church, Eagle Scout, did everything right. And he told me, he said, "When I got to be a sophomore in High School, I began to just have this feeling about being a preacher. I wasn't sure about it. I kind of put it behind me, but it kept nagging at me and nagging at me." He said, "Until my senior year, I final said, 'Alright God. If that's what you want to be, I'll do it.'" And he said, "This overwhelming peace came in me the minute I said that." And he said, "That's why I went to Hardin Simmons, majored in what I majored in, that's why I'm sitting here in seminary." My call came because I was outside the will of God. His call came gently because he was inside the will of God. I don't know how it comes, it doesn't matter. At some point He will share with you what His purpose is.

Now when He shares that with you, do not disavow your call because of who you think you are. Look at what he says.

*"Behold, Lord, I don't know how to speak. I am only a youth. But the Lord said to me, "Do not say I am only a youth."*

You do not disavow your call because of who you think you are. Because sometimes we just don't think we can do exactly what God's called us to do. We don't get that. And I want you to understand that's simply not, not the case.

When I was saved listening to Billy Graham preach, from then on I listened to every crusade I could watch of Billy Grahams. Which ultimately damaged me. Because Billy Graham always had a set formula in all his crusades. George Beverly and Cliff Barrows would sing some music. He would be funny. He would be witty. George Beverly Shea would sing before he preached. But they always had somebody that gave their testimony. And the guy that gave their testimony was always like the quarterback at LSU, a successful businessman, or the smartest kid at MIT, or if it wasn't all those, it was some guy who had been involved in drugs and alcohol and sexual immorality. And now he got saved and he's done with all that and now he's found Jesus. And it was always these really glamorous testimonies or people that were intensely successful. None of which applied to me. I wasn't successful in any way. I wasn't the cool kid in school. Wasn't the best athlete. Wasn't the smartest kid in the class. In my testimony, I did some goofy things before I came to Christ. I never drank. I never did drugs. I was a virgin when I married. So I didn't have the testimony and so over time as I watched that Billy Graham stuff, I began to think in my mind, "Well God can't really do anything with me because I don't fit those categories." And in time the Holy Spirit said to me, "Don't you dare cut yourself short because of who you think you are." Because it's not about you, it's about God. And if He calls you to something, it doesn't matter who you think you are, He's there. And it doesn't matter what anybody else thinks about you. I get it. After I was called to preach, I told the church which was probably a mistake. And I had several people said, "What are you going to do? We know you were going to Alabama." I said, "Well I'm not going to Alabama now. I don't know anything about the Bible so since I'm going to preach it I probably ought to learn a little bit. So I'm going to Mississippi College. And I'm going to major in Bible." And I can't tell you how many well-meaning adults, and I get it, they knew me, and I understand. Well-meaning adults came up to me and said, "You know, Brother Chris, we think really," and they didn't call me Brother Chris at that point. It was like, "Hey, weirdo. Before, really it might be better for you to go to Alabama. You probably need a secular education in case this doesn't work out for you." Now I can't tell you how many people told me that. And I get it, they were well-meaning and they knew me and that was probably the correct assumption. But I'm telling you it doesn't matter what other people say about you or what you think about yourself. You take God's call and you live it out and He will honor you in every way possible. And He'll equip you. Verse 9:

<sup>9</sup>I have put My words in your mouth.

He will equip you for whatever He's called you to do. Sometimes that equipping is weird. If you take, you're in charge of missions and you've got to choose two men to go to the Jews and the Gentiles; that's your choice. You've got to candidates before you. You've got Peter and you've got Paul. So you look at the resumes. Paul's resume is like several pages thick. Grew up in a Jewish home. Educated secularly at Tarsus. Studied under the greatest rabbi of his day. The most well-known Jewish rabbi of his day. Went to school under him. He's a Pharisee. He grew up in the tribe of Benjamin. He's lived it out. I mean he was, when Stephen was stoned, everything about this guy is large about being a Jew. You pull up Peter's resume, it's one page. How much Bible do you know? One answer: not sure. He's grown up fishing. He knows fishing. He doesn't

know anything about Hebrew. He doesn't know anything about how to interpret that. He doesn't know Aramaic. Paul knows all that. He knows none of that and he's really kind of course. Paul's very genteel. He's very Jewish. He's very programmed to be a rabbi and fit into the Jewish culture. So if you've got these two people in front of you, what do you do? You send Peter where? You sent him to the Gentiles. You send Paul where? You send him to the Jews. What did God do? He sent Paul to the Gentiles and sent Peter to the Jews. God just messed up? The Holy Spirit missed it then? Absolutely not, it was one of the most brilliant thing, one of the most brilliant things God ever did. Number one, Paul evangelized the Gentile world. You know how he did it? He walked down a street in the Roman empire and he simply went from city to city. He was a well-known Jewish rabbi. So whenever he would come into a town and it was announced he was in the town, the rabbi there said, "Hey, Paul, will you preach for us?" So he would go in the synagogue, which had Gentile converts in it. And he would go in there and preach. He'd go through Isaiah 53, Psalm 22, Isaiah 7, he worked through all these messianic passages. And when he was done, he would say, "The Messiah is Jesus Christ." And some of the Jews would believe. Most of the Gentiles would. They'd leave the synagogue. They'd start a church. Paul would go to the next town. It was brilliant because his Judaism gave him automatic opportunity to preach in every Gentile town he went to.

Peter, who knew nothing about the Bible, he preached one time and it blew away the rabbis. And their statement was, listen, they took note that he was uneducated, but that he had been with Jesus. They took note that three years with Jesus did more than their lifetime under a rabbi did. God may equip you in a way you can't possibly imagine. But He will equip you. So He's going to call you. He's got a purpose. He's going to equip you. You don't base that purpose on who you think you are or who other people think you are. You base that purpose on the call from Jesus Christ.

So what do I do then? I think you wrap your call around the five things we wrap this church around. You wrap your call around the sovereignty of God. That the enemy's going to come after you and he's going to do everything he can to get you. But I'm telling you, the Bible makes a great statement: greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world. Satan and God are not equal. The Mormons believe they're half-brothers. They're not half-brothers. God is the Creator. Satan a created being who is not in disfavor with that God. He's not even close to God. He may come after you, you rely on Jesus, he can't touch you. That's exactly what God said, "I put my words in your mouth. I've set you this day over and I make you this day a fortified city. They will fight against you, but they shall not prevail against you." You stand in the sovereignty of God and Satan loses every single day.

Number two, you live out this book; exactly what it says as it says. Which may mean for some of us, and we've got to live the book out correctly, not American theology. American theology says you ought to marry and have a kid, build a home. That's not true for everybody. I don't know what's happened to us, but sometimes we look at singles and think, "Well if they were a little more normal, they'd be married." No, they're the most normal because they're following God's call even though it removes some of their happiness. So you live this out no matter what it says. And everywhere you go you take the message of the blood of Jesus Christ because that's the only hope anybody in the world has. It's not in the church. It's not in little league. It's in the blood of Jesus Christ. So you take that with you. Number four, you engage in a church because you need Christian brothers and sisters to make it through this. You can't do this alone. You can't live out

God's call alone. You need some men and women in your life who stand for Jesus Christ and believe what you believe. Because they're the only people that are going to be optimistic with you.

There was two guys that hunted together for years. One was an optimist; one was a pessimist. And they were both huge on both sides. The pessimist, a pessimist about everything. The optimist, an optimist about everything. So finally the optimist decided he'd win the day. They were going duck hunting in six months and so he bought a Labrador and he taught him how to walk on water. Worked with him for months, taught him how to walk on water, he thought, "This will impress the pessimist." They get to opening day of hunting. They drop a couple of Mallards. He looks at the dog, says, "Go", the dog walks across the water out to where the ducks are. The pessimist looks at him and goes, "Man your dog can't even swim." You don't want those people around your life. You want some people that are going to look at you and go, "I can't believe your dog can walk on the water." You want some people who believe what you believe about Jesus Christ, about the Word, about the sovereignty of God, about who He is.

And last thing, you're going to base your life around the fact that He's coming back to reward you for everything you do for Him in this world. And I realize we tend to think that's pie in the sky, but it's not. There's coming a day when God will absolutely reward you for who you are and you want to end well. I just watched the head of Southern Baptists end poorly. You don't want to end poorly. You want to come to the end in love with Jesus, in love with your family, and in love with everything God honors. You do that and you win.

Let's pray.

Father I do pray for all these high school graduates. I pray for college graduates. They're heading out to a, particularly these high school kids who are heading out to make the decision of where they go with You, where they go with the family, where they go with a career, where they go with a calling. And Father, these next four years are pivotal for them and so I ask you to honor them, to bless them, to carry them, and I just ask You to let them find Your call, find Your purpose, surrender to it, and Father I ask that this church send out an army of people that stand for You everywhere they go. Honor them and bless them. In Jesus Christ name.