

We are all Called by God    Version D

Jeremiah 1:4-10 and Luke 4:1-14

Today you and I begin a new chapter in our lives as I become your new pastor and we begin ministry together as the church. Wow! What a challenge we have to be the church with the challenges we face as Christians and as the church in the world today. We are all called by God to be his disciples! Do you remember when you were call to be one of Jesus disciples? It was the day you accepted Jesus as your personally Savior. Also the day you became a member of the church you made a covenant to be involved in its ministries and support it financially. Wow! My other question to you what language do you speak as a Christian in the world we live in today?

I know this story, I'm going share have help me in my walk with Christ. It goes like this a momma mouse that has her baby mice following behind her as they are moving across the farmer's field. When all of the sudden, a big cat pounces on the momma mouse and her baby mice. The momma mouse lets out a big noise and screams, "Bow wow! Bow wow!" whereupon the cat runs away as fast as she can. The momma mouse turns to her children and says, Now you know the benefit of knowing a second language. So are you speaking the language of your God totally? I know I didn't always listen to God's voice, sometimes I wanted to do it my way.

Did you know that we learned at early age — at the age of two these words—"I want to do it myself." Today, some people still operate that way. For me at Annual Conference of 1992, however, this all changed. I always had a feeling inside of me since I was 12 being called to pastoral ministry. And these words would go through my head: Dan , do you think maybe God is calling you to ministry. And from that moment the thought was never far from my mind, but I had lots of excuses, and lots of other plans I thought was more important. I wanted to follow in my fathers footsteps working in his TV , Furniture, Appliance and Service store.

In which it was my father dream as well. But down deep my true feelings hidden. My involvement in church was not enough. Discerning my call with the pastor help in sense, but I still I was not facing my true feelings. And as I made those changes I wanted not God, God kept tapping me on my shoulder, whispering in my ear, I'm still here. I'm still calling. I still want you. I heard a voice saying that I would be a minister someday. I really never thought much about it then. Was I talking or was it God? I didn't know. Throughout my journey, I have been involved in many ministries within the church.

When Martha and I got married I became a member of the United Methodist church in Camden, Maine. We were accepted as we were by people there. We were welcome there. The church was and is the place for connection - a place where we could connect to each other and connect to God and belong. At Annual Conference of 1992 during ordination service the Bishop Skeete made a call to Christian Service. Where I was standing singing that wonder hymn "Here I Am" My foot went to left then to right .... then I said to myself ... No way! And God was listening like always. And my ears were open so clearly, I heard God said, "No more excuses... and I went down to answer my call. My Heart was thumping and I was feeling like I was on cloud nine and a peace that is undescrible.

And I guess that's when I started responding to God. No burning bushes. No lightening bolts from the sky. Just a sense of God's presence and God's desire to use me for God's purposes. Maybe a push with my feet. In the beginning and sometimes today, I have had thoughts like:. How am I supposed to do this job, God? How can I help or say the right words to a person of any age? What words do I share from the pulpit? Amidst the joys and the sorrows of all of our lives, somehow, someway, I'm supposed to let God use me and be guided by the Holy Spirit. The key for all we say and do should be guided by the Holy Spirit - our Advocate and our Advisor. And we cannot forget prayer. Prayer is powerful! In Jeremiah 1:5, The words of the Lord came to Jeremiah, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I

set you apart: I appointed you as a prophet to the nations.” We see Jeremiah was called to serve God. God called, but Jeremiah had other plans for his life.

He had a life to live. He had places to go, people to see, things to do. But that was that OK for Jeremiah to give an excuse to God. Or was it? Like so many, Jeremiah had an excuse. Jeremiah excuse was that he was too young. But God, he said, I’m only a boy! Remember Moses? He told God, I’m not smart enough to go to Egypt and tell Pharaoh to let my people go. Remember Noah? He said, But God, there is not a cloud in the sky. The list goes on! All these people made the right choice they listen to God. I strongly believe that my call was like this. God has led me to His ministry with a very clear call. Never before have I felt such clear direction.

This time I listen to God’s voice and not my own. And I made the right choice. You can only run so far! I am reminded of John 3:8: where he talks about our faithfulness requiring a certain amount of flexibility permitting us to change course, "as the wind blows and shifts." God asks us to be ready for this and to go to unexpected places. My call is based on the faith that God will guide me through this journey into the ministry and through the rest of my life. How about Jesus who was tempted by the devil in the wilderness and he could have taken the easy way out. But Jesus didn’t. Did he? Jesus made the right choice for us all. We find Jesus in the wilderness.

Jesus is thinking. He is considering the direction of his life. And he is being tempted in a major way. One temptation was to turn a stone into bread. The Tempter said: “If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread.” That was a challenge. Why? Well, if he could do it, wouldn’t he have gained a large following as a provider of food for the everybody? Jesus said, “One does not live by bread alone.” That was strike one for the Enemy. The Tempter then tried to toy with Jesus’ mind. “See all the kingdoms of the world. You could have power over all of them. They would all give you glory and authority if you follow my leadership and worship me.” Wouldn’t that blow your mind. Power, wealth, glory -- what else might one might desire?

But Jesus said, "It is written, 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.'" That was strike two for the Tempter. Then the Tempter started quoting scripture. "It is written, '[God] will command his angels ... to protect you and on their hands they will bear you up so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.'" He told Jesus that if that was so, he could hurl himself down from the top of the great temple and not be hurt. Jesus must be willing to practice self-denial and make personal sacrifices for the sake of others. By desiring to become a bridge to faith, Jesus demonstrated his love for God. So Satan turned this love on its head and said, "If God loves you let him prove it. Throw yourself down and let God's angels attend to you." Sometimes we get a distorted idea about what love is. By refusing to put God's love to the test, Jesus affirmed that God's love for us is unconditional. With the knowledge that God loved him, Jesus found it easier to avoid the temptation because of his relationship to God. With Christ's refusal to give in to that temptation, the Tempter struck out and went on his way.

What was the end result of those temptations which Christ refused? Resisting temptation has its rewards. Before we consider that reality, we must realize that salvation comes by faith, that is, reconciliation with God involves complete trust in God our Creator through Christ our Lord. Our reconciliation with God comes through our faith in Christ. That is how we become assured that we are the children of God and receive the manifold gifts of grace. That is how we know "God's love has been poured into our hearts." Such blessings are the rewards of fully accepting Christ as Lord and as Savior.

Today, however, let us consider other rewards of God's grace, how we are to share the Good News to all ages here and beyond these walls. This concept is where transformation could happen in person life and same time growing in our faith as well. Jesus didn't let temptation interfere with the ministry he was called to do? Jesus didn't make excuses, but spend a lot of time in prayer with God! That was one of Jesus spiritual connection that gave him strength to do all he did. Today the church needs to be a verb all we do and say. That means for us to live out our faith. And it can be fruitful too. God has something for you to do!

When we really walk with God it can bring new possibilities for all of us God has plans for us. God isn't done with any of us yet. And at the heart of most of our excuses is with self. Its my life, we might say. Call someone else, God. But God says, Don't you know that before I formed you in the womb, I knew you. But God, we might say, I am only me. And God will says, That is why I am calling! People of God, open your hearts to God calling you today. Do not be afraid, do not make excuses, and do not worry that you are not good enough. Let us listen to God's voice who has given us so much. Let us make this world the place our God wants it to be.

Full of love for everyone. AMEN!