

Known By God

2019, Pastor Debbie Bronkema
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In this sermon, Pastor Debbie asks us to remember that God's promise to us is that even "before I formed you in the womb, I knew you." And that we are called to discover the "I" that God has made us to be. "Now the word of the Lord came to me saying, '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.' " --Jeremiah 1:4-5 (Originally Preached on Sunday, August 25, 2019 at Pleasantville Presbyterian Church)

Scripture: "Luke 13:10-13"

<http://bible.oremus.org/?ql=433756662>

[0:01] A reading from Luke 13 vs. 10 to 13.

Now he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath, and just then there appeared a woman with a spirit that had crippled her for 18 years.

She was bent over and was quite unable to stand up straight.

When Jesus saw her, he called her over and said, Woman, you are set free from your ailment.

When he laid his hands on her immediately, she stood up straight and began praising God, the word of the Lord.

Scripture: "Jeremiah 1:4-10"

<http://bible.oremus.org/?ql=433756676>

[0:47] From Jeremiah 1. Now, the word of the Lord came to me saying, "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.

Then I said, "Ah, Lord God, truly I do not know how to speak for I am only a boy."

But the Lord said to me, "Do not say I am only a boy, for 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 says the Lord."

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.

See, Today I appoint you over nations and over kingdoms to pluck up and to pull down, to destroy, in, to overthrow,
to build and to plant.

The word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

[2:06] Please pray with me.

[2:10] Dear God, May the words of my mouth and the listening ears of our hearts be acceptable in thy sight.

Oh, God, our rock and our redeemer. Amen.

Sermon: "Known By God"

[2:25] The social media influencer. It is a career that did not use to exist, but advertisers know to go where the people are.

And so the influencer is like the commercial celebrity endorsements of the past.

They come from people who show up on social media on our phone or our computer telling us what we need to buy to look like them to be like them.

They could be famous, or they can just be people who take really great pictures.

But whoever these influencers are, the best ones make people feel like we know them and they know what it is to be us.

People want to feel known. It is part of our human nature.

In the 1960s and 70s, people used to go on existential journeys to find themselves to recognize for themselves who they were.

Maybe some of you in this room did that.

May Sarton uses these words to express the feeling of wanting to be who we are now I become myself.

"It's taken time, many years and places I have been dissolved and shaken, worn other people's faces."

[3:52] Another one of my favorites includes these words by William Stafford, "Sometime when the river is ice asked me mistakes I have made, asked me whether what I have done is my life."

[4:10] We want to be known. We want to feel seen.

We want our life to be our life.

Before I formed you in the womb I knew you There is something about those words that speaks to us on the deepest of levels in this world.

This place of so many distractions that separate us from one another.

We want the very words Jeremiah heard from God.

We want to know that we are known and seen that even before we were born, we were us.

We are who we were meant to be in this life.

This life is about discovering the "I" that God made me to be and the "I" that God made each of us to be.

But God doesn't stop there. God goes on to tell Jeremiah that he has been chosen to do certain work in the Kingdom of God,

that Jeremiah will use his voice and speak the words people need to hear, to help them find

and follow God again.

[5:31] Jeremiah has a child has been told that he has a specific role to play in helping the people of God see where they've gone wrong, being God's voice, pointing them toward repentance, even if that's a message they don't want to hear.

Now, maybe we think that people in the Bible are perfect, which makes it hard to imagine ourselves like them.

But that's not Jeremiah. He complains all the time, constantly about how hard is this work that God has given him?

How if this is what he was born for? Well, he's not so sure that God picked the right guy and he doesn't stop doing the complaining.

But at the same time, he doesn't stop doing what he's been called to do.

Even when the going gets really, really hard, he doesn't stop being who he is.

Sometimes we feel like we know who we are we feel is though we're on the right path toward identity, and then something happens to change that to confuse us, to make us feel as though we're lost.

[6:50] Kim Buchanan tells the story of a woman who was diagnosed with rheumatoid arthritis when she was only 32 and as the disease began to claim her body in painful ways, she cried out to God,

saying, I don't even know who I am anymore.

And then there was this very soft voice saying, You're still my child.

[7:21] And if you still want to be my disciple, there's a heap more work for you to do.

[7:31] As long as we have life and breath, we can be a disciple and we can be on a journey with God.

Maybe the journey is being an intercessory prayer or writing letters or emails to people who need to hear from someone or visiting people who don't have visitors.

[7:55] We're being present when someone needs a listening ear.

That long ago I did a funeral for a woman in her nineties and her family told me that when she could do nothing else, she still blew them kisses.

She still made them know that she loved them, that she saw them, that they matter to her, people need to be seen. People need to be known.

And one of these things we can do as a church is be a place that takes the time to know each other to reflect that value that God gives each of us back to one another,

to say and believe that we all matter.

We all have potential. We all have a chance to be who we are and live out our purpose.

Trusting in God.

[9:01] These three that we've met here today they are just starting a path as young adult volunteers.

Maybe they felt a sense of call to embrace his particular path.

Maybe they're looking for themselves or a way to be themselves.

Maybe they heard someone else talk about this journey and they signed up because somewhere inside there was this voice saying, This is me.

This is my path. In this moment of time this is a chance for me to say yes to the question asked me whether what I have done is my life.

[9:46] We're thankful to be a step on your journey, commissioning you and recognizing that like you,

we all have a place to be in life a role in discipleship that we need to say yes to to be who we are created to be,

May we open ourselves up to be known Hey, we open our hearts up in prayer to be seen to be loved,

to be consecrated in the love and the light of Christ Jesus in his name, **Amen.**