

Be courageous! You are precious!

Sermon for the 9th Sunday after Trinity

Sermon Text: Jeremiah 1:4-10



4 Now the word of the Lord came to me, saying, 5 "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." 6 Then I said, "Ah Lord God! Behold, I do not know how to speak, for I am only a youth." 7 But the Lord said to me, "Do not say, I am only a youth; for to all to whom I send you, you shall go, and whatever I command you, you shall speak. 8 Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you, declares the Lord." 9 Then

the Lord put out His hand and touched my mouth. And the Lord said to me, "Behold, I have put my words in your mouth. 10 See, I have set you this day over nations and over kingdoms, to pluck up and to break down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant."

Are you young? Do you feel that your words remain invalid in the clamor of world events and simply fall into the void? Do you feel like you shouldn't speak so that you aren't branded as a fanatic?

If so, you should listen carefully today. Because one of God's great prophets had this same feeling: "Ah Lord God! Behold, I do not know how to speak for I am only a youth," said the young boy, Jeremiah. God had to gently help His prophet. God had to teach him the way to a new trust. And just as Jeremiah had to learn it, we must also learn it. God must teach us the way to a new trust:

And God does this by showing us:

- By whose authority we speak
- Why we can blindly trust
- And where we get the strength to face the worst challenges

By whose authority do we speak? Today, if you ask where someone got their authority to speak on a topic, many know immediately what to say: everyone knows a famous scientist or relies on their favorite guru. And the worst of all, there are those who put it all on the table: "I trust in the inner voice," they say.... or "in the god inside myself...." Even though it is true that God speaks through people, when He does this, it has nothing to do with giving any one person more authority over anyone else. This is impressively shown through Jeremiah. Initially, Jeremiah had no trust in himself. He only knew one thing very well. And that was that he knew nothing and was not competent. God had to gently redirect his thoughts. "It is not about what you can do or what you are," God says to Jeremiah. "It has everything to do with fact that I know you. That I have always known you and that I know you now too." It is certainly was not that Jeremiah should speak from his many years of profound experiences. No! What was to happen was for God's Word to become active. "God's Word came to me," Jeremiah would later write. What a tremendous encouragement this remains for us today: A Word that can still give us strength and

comfort today: on the one side we face the enormous challenges of our world and on the other side, we, who know nothing and can do nothing, stand opposite those challenges. We are too young, too old, too uneducated, too sick.... The reasons are numerous, and we know that we can't do anything about the great challenges that are before us. Nevertheless, God's Word works among us! God's Word writes history! God is above the political and social challenges of our world. In the end, Corona isn't sitting on the throne, but God is. And this God not only knows the entire world and its problems. He also knows you. He knows you personally. He knows all your mistakes and He knows about your weaknesses. And that's exactly why He stands by you! If we want to open our mouths and speak, then it's certainly not because we think we are better or smarter than everyone else. Rather, what we do is simply this: We want to take God's Word, that has been in existence since the first day of creation, into our mouths and say: God's Word does what it promises.

Why can we blindly trust this Word? We can do so not only because God wills it, but also because He brings it about. It was God's will that Adam and Eve should live. That's why He formed them with such love and breathed His personal breath into them. God wanted them! And God also wants us! Unlike parents who complain about their children's untimely birth because there wasn't enough money or because the relationship was difficult, God doesn't complain that we are there. From the beginning, you were part of His plan. Not only the day and hour of your birth but every single day is firmly incorporated in His plan. And God wants you exactly as He made you. It is not important if we are all prophets like Jeremiah. Not all of us are called to be prophets! But each of us is called! And it seems to me that God has a very special pleasure in choosing people who others underestimate or people who can't do anything. Jeremiah was a boy who, in the shadows of the olive trees, was taken seriously at most by only a few sheep. In his vicinity, there were countless prophets and scholars who had better qualifications than he. This inclination for weak people is demonstrated by God throughout the Bible. Moses couldn't speak Hebrew properly. Jesus chose 12 disciples who together were odd, grumpy, uneducated, and even stubborn. Not exactly the role models of history. But the story of God continues. The greatest missionary, Paul, was of all things a murderer of Christians.... Are you mentally or physically afflicted? Are you uneducated? Do you feel unworthy? Then you have all the best qualifications to be God's instrument because God uses people just like you! And He does it to make clear that it is **God** who is working through weak people. And not the **people** getting power through God to influence or suppress others.

And where do we get the strength to speak and act when everything around us passes into nothingness? In Jeremiah's case, God literally put the Word into his mouth. This Word was a source of strength. At the beginning of creation God said: "Let there be light." This Word is the same Word that God placed in Jeremiah's mouth. It is also the same Word that the twelve apostles received from Jesus. The light of God burned in their hearts and they passed it on however they could. I have already said: We are not all apostles and prophets. But we have their words. At the deathbed of one of our members, I learned what a source of strength God's Word is. Every breath of this old man was a fight. The illness had completely worn him out. He had no more strength and was on the brink of death. But again and again, he had the words of his confirmation verse on his lips and witnessed to us all: "fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand." Amen.