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1 Corinthians 13:1-13; Jeremiah 1:4-10

“Fully Known” by Guest Preacher: LydiaGrace Quine-Espiritu Gray M.div February 2019

Beloved Christian author Timothy Keller writes: “To be loved but not known is comforting but superficial. To be known and not loved is our greatest fear. But to be fully known and truly loved...is a lot like being loved by God.” This all-knowing all-loving God is the God we meet in the call narrative of Jeremiah.

We see it immediately – this intimacy that God has with Jeremiah. In verse four we read: “Now the word of the LORD came to me:” there is this contact – this God-stooping-down to be with Jeremiah. Then, the words themselves are even more intimate: “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you.” This word “to form” is the Hebrew verb *yatzar*, the same word used in Genesis describing God’s forming of the first human being out of the dust. There is this idea of God getting God’s hands dirty: of taking a mass of clay and squeezing and sculpting until it becomes the shape that God had in mind. Later on, this word is used in doxologies to praise God as the God who forms the world, the one who forms human beings, even the one who forms the human soul, the *ruach*, the breath, the spirit within us.

This is an intimate sentiment; before you were formed I knew you, before you even knew you existed, before you had a mind, before you had a body, before you had a soul, I knew you, and I appointed you – a prophet to the nations. What an opening! What would you and I say to such an intimate calling of God? What does Jeremiah say?

Here, Jeremiah is so relatable. Because his reply to this intimacy is, “Ahhh! Lord God! I don’t know how to speak for I am only a boy!” He says, I don’t know, I don’t know how, and I’m not the right person, the right age, I don’t have the right wisdom, the right skills. It’s reminiscent of Moses at the burning bush saying, “I can’t go to Pharaoh, I am slow of speech and slow of tongue.” We can relate because we can think of our own “reasons” or excuses for why we can’t do this or that, why we aren’t fit for what God might be calling us to do, why we can’t fill the needs we see, why we can’t respond to that pull on our hearts. We can think of those reasons right now. Just take a moment. What excuses do you have? Things you say about yourself: I’m not qualified. I’m not an extrovert. I don’t have the experience. I don’t want to. Each excuse can get in line along with Jeremiah’s excuses.