

“Called BY God”
Jeremiah 29: 10-14 (NRSV)
November 11, 2018
Rev. Dave Baldrige

Palm Harbor United Methodist Church, Palm Harbor, Florida

Today we begin a 3-sermon series on “Called” Called to live lives of meaning and purpose.

Most people I know want to live a life that have meaning and purpose. Who wants to be simply a bump on a log? Who wants to simply do nothing with their life? I know I don’t. So, let me ask for a response: Who wants to live a life of meaning and purpose say, “I do!” XXXX

Woo-hoo!!! Across the generations. Intergenerational. All here! All ages! All In!

We want to develop here at PHUMC a culture of calling. The word culture has several meanings. Culture can mean he beliefs and shared attitudes and values of people. Another meaning of culture is a taste in fine arts and the humanities. The culture of an art museum. And yet another use of culture is body tissues or fluid evaluated in a lab to identify infection. A blood culture. When there is a blood culture or a culture of tissue you have wait for the culture to grow.

Well...we want the culture of calling to grow. Grow---not an infection, but an affection to respond to God’s call to love Him and love others.

We want a shared culture...values and a belief system that God calls everyone. Turn to your neighbor and says, “Was he talking to me?” xxxxx Yes, yes, I was. All are called. And yet we have different types of callings.

The calling we are talking about in our series is the Call from God. The word call/calling can used grammatically several ways. It can be used as a noun, such as, “I’m trying to figure out what my calling is?” It can be used as a verb, “God called me.” But in our series, we are going to be looking at calling and prepositions.

Prepositions are a part of speech that connects words to other words. Prepositions express relationship.

This week: Called BY God. Next week: Called TO...called to be followers of Jesus. And the series will conclude with Called AS. Called as we are. You see, all of us are called by God.

Last week I mentioned that I had little “blue haired” ladies pinching my face saying, “David, you ought to go into ministry!” That may have been the little old ladies...I mean the advanced in years female person’s calling me, but I wanted to know that I know that I know that God was calling me. I wanted to know that I was called by God not by blue haired ladies.

I accepted the call to be a Christian in 5th grade. It was also at that time I dedicated my life in service to Him.

God didn't immediately let me know what His calling was. In High School, yes, I had the little ladies calling, but I wanted to know I was called by God. I wanted God to give me a sign. C'mon God write it in the sky. Spell it out for me. I even thought about it and thought, "You know, I wouldn't mind be a preacher." But I still wanted to be called by God, not by the church ladies or even it being my desire.

I was still waiting to hear that clear call by God. I graduated from high school and went one year to my local community college. I then transferred in as a Sophomore to Asbury College. It was during my orientation week that I experienced the call by God. Professor was leading us in devotions and in my spirit, it was as if God said, "This is how you can witness for me."

However, my calling by God I felt was not to be a pastor, but to be a teacher. In specific to teach at a Christian School. So, I got a Bachelor of Science degree in Secondary Education. A major in Speech/Drama Communications. This Illinois boy who went to school in Kentucky and just became engaged to my Kentucky woman moved to Miami, Florida to teach at a Christian school. During those first several months of teach my fiancée Sarah said, "Dave are you fulfilled teaching, or is there another step God is wanting to you to take." I said I liked teaching okay, but I really liked ministering to the students."

During Christmas break of that school year I went to my parents' home in Illinois. Sarah my engaged was there...I got goosebumps.... if you don't know what I'm talking about see/listen to last week's sermon! Sarah asked me, "Dave is a matter of IF you go to seminary or WHEN you go to seminary." Hmmm...good question. Called by God to accept his saving grace in 5th grade, dedicated my life to service to Him, trying to decide the call in High School, now this.

I went to my home church and spoke at our Wednesday night Prayer Meeting. Not knowing what I was internally struggling with a woman came up to me after my message and said, "When you and Sarah get married you will make a wonderful couple in ministry." And then a saint of a woman, a retired Pastor's wife, came up and 'gave' me a Bible verse. It was this: **Revelation 3:8 King James Version (KJV)⁸ I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.** Wow!

I went back to my parents' house and knelt and prayed at the foot of my bed. It was then that the clear confirmation of being called by God came. Yes, now is the time. Not if seminary...but when...and the when is now. Called into full time ministry.

I told Sarah, and then I told my mom. My mom simply said, "It's about time." I went back to Miami to finish teaching the school year. Within the first weeks back I met with my principal to tell him that I would not return the following school year. In his office I began to tell him that I would not be returning and he stopped me and said, "You are going to be a preacher, aren't you?"

Okay God...I got it!!! I believe God's calling is done and confirmed by several things: the Holy Spirit, scripture, circumstances and others. I finished that teach that school year, got married in July and the next month began Seminary.

Yes, called BY God into full time ministry. You calling may not be full time ministry. However, I don't want to neglect that someone here today may be being called to full time ministry. However, all of us are called to be in ministry---not necessarily in vocation, but in response to God's call on our lives.

Let's look at our scripture: **Jeremiah 29 ¹¹ For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the LORD, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope.**

He KNOWS the plans. Notice it is the plans He has for you...not the plans that you have for you. Some translations say plans for your prosperity instead of welfare. We will address that in just a moment. Also, some not only say plans for your prosperity and not for evil...this translation, New Revised Standard Version, says harm. His plans---God's plans to is give you this for a future with hope. How many want a future with hope? Xxxx Listen and follow God's plans.

¹² Then when you call upon me and come and pray to me, I will hear you. God says when you CALL upon me AND come and pray to me...I WILL hear you.

¹³ When you search for me, you will find me; if you seek me with all your heart, When you search for God...you WILL find Him, He says. IF...conditional. If, you seek Him with ALL your heart. Not part of your heart, not fill me up $\frac{3}{4}$'s but ALL your heart.

As part of our Called series next week we have a Called to Serve Weekend. **(image)** I want to thank Rose Bentley our Missions Coordinator for the extraordinary work she has done getting this weekend ready. Next Sunday there will only be one worship service. Worship time is 9:30. Next week, how many worship services???? Xxxxxxx What time? XXXXX

See Rose in the Multi-Purpose Room after the service but there is something for all ages in this Called to Serve Weekend.

Friday---Habitat for Humanity, Metropolitan Ministries at Pasco, to work here at PHUMC bagging cookies to be delivered to fire and police stations. Decorating cards.

Saturday---painting, cleaning and gardening at RCS Grace House, singing at St. Mark Village, feeding the homeless with Boy and Girls Club of Tarpon Springs. Help at Metropolitan Ministries Pasco. Helping at our Veterans dinner.

Sunday---and part of the reason we are having 1 service. Serve breakfast to homeless as Joining Hands Mission in Port Richey, work at Metropolitan Ministries, work on UMCOR, United Methodist Committee On Relief, team in Largo working on a house damaged by Hurricane Irma (at 11 am), here at PHUMC at 11 in Multi- Purpose room sorting clothes and making toiletry bags for homeless. Serving Peanut Butter and Jelly sandwiches to homeless with Boys and girls club.

What a weekend. What a day! At that one service at---what time???---we will hear some testimonies from Friday and Saturday and prepare to continue work after the service. Called to Serve Weekend!!!!

All are called by God. Many of these mentioned are things that children can be involved with as well as those the eldest among us. God is no respecter of persons when it comes to age and calling. All are called. That is the culture we are trying to develop here at PHUMC.

If you have a smart phone, which often times is smarter than me, you find a little icon that will tell you of your recent calls. You also have a little icon that tells you if you have missed calls. Get your phones out. Check your recent calls. Has God called you? Or did you miss His call?

Let's go back and look at verse 11 of our scripture text. **¹¹For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the LORD, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope.** We mentioned the word welfare...some translations use the word prosperity. The Old Testament was written in Hebrew. And the Hebrew word (**image**) is actually Shalom. Shalom is more than just welfare or prosperity, it is more than just peace. (**image**) It is a multi-faceted meaning word---well being, completeness, prosperity, wholeness, health, safety, harmony with God and others. Plans for your Shalom. We are called to Shalom. It is God's plan. But more than just for us. It is ultimately about God who can provide our completeness. The intention of God's purpose, God's calling is Shalom. But not just for us...Paul says this:

2 Corinthians 5:18-20 Common English Bible (CEB) ¹⁸ All of these new things are from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and who gave us the ministry of reconciliation. ¹⁹ In other words, God was reconciling the world to himself through Christ, by not counting people's sins against them. He has trusted us with this message of reconciliation. ²⁰ So we are ambassadors who represent Christ. God is negotiating with you through us. We beg you as Christ's representatives, "Be reconciled to God!"

Verse 20, Message Bible: "We're Christ's representatives. God uses us to persuade men and women to drop their differences and enter into God's work of making things right between them."

How are we/you called by God? What is our part in God's Shalom? As Christ's representatives what are you being called by God to do? Oh yes, there is the Called to Serve Weekend. Once again, we awoke this week to a tragic shooting. Yet another one.

Rev. Cathy called me and by the prompting of the Holy Spirit, called BY God said Dave we must do something. Amen and Amen. And I as said a couple of weeks ago...it begins right here, in this place, in your heart and taken to the streets, communities and neighborhoods.

Rev. Cathy told me of the quote from the movie "Evan Almighty." Morgan Freeman played God and had this great quote to Evan (Noah): (**image**) **"How do we change the world? One single act of random kindness at a time."**

Act Random Kindness, Act Random Kindness, Act Random Kindness
(image)

And to begin making a difference Rev. Cathy has issued a challenge on Facebook. If you are Facebook person please like our Church Facebook page to get notifications. I whole heartedly endorse the challenge. Here is the challenge: "Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. (Romans 12:9, 21) In a time of division, violence and hate we are called to be witnesses to God's loved. Let us put our love into action. Join the challenge to change your part of the world. Here is the challenge: Do one single act of random kindness each day. Act Random Kindness---ARK

Let's get on the ARK! Who's going with me? Who is going to join me in doing an Act of Random Kindness each day? XXXXX