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Jeremiah 1:4-10, Corinthians 3:1-13
January 31, 2010

I tried this morning to check in with God on this and, I'm not sure, but I think God said you get extra credit for coming today. It's good to be together in God's house. I thought last night I would rewrite a whole new sermon on the meaning of snow. I couldn't quite figure it out; there's something there. Snow and ice is beautiful when you see it but yet it's a little bit perilous once you're out on it. You have to go slow, you have to be careful, you can't be in a rush.

Maybe God's like that. There's a beauty, it's a little bit perilous, but you go slow, you take your time, you listen, you're attentive. That's all I could get out of a snow sermon. So, I'll go back to the one I was working on earlier about Jeremiah and Paul's wonderful letter to the Corinthians. Jeremiah, God calls him to be a prophet when he is just 14 or 15 years old, but God says "I'm not even calling you now. I called you before you were even in your mother's womb." I mean, think about this, we brought these young infants up here today. Before they even were in their mother's wombs, God knew them and had something for them. That's just remarkable.

And then Paul writes to the Christians in Corinth and says these beautiful words about love is patient and kind, and love is not arrogant or rude. He's not writing a poem for young lovers to be read at weddings in the future. Paul was writing to a cantankerous church where people were having a hard time getting along with each other, and he says you're supposed to love. Love is patient and kind, love is not rude, love does not insist on its own way.

Interestingly, to me, all this could be said about God because God is love. Think about that. *If I have all power but have not love I am nothing.* You see, God doesn't just overwhelm us with God's power. God is love. Love is patient. God is patient. Love is kind. Love bears. Love hopes. These are all true of God. Love does not insist on its own way. Some of us wonder why bad things happen in the world and God doesn't just manipulate us like so many marionettes so that everything goes just the way God wants it, but God loves, and love does not insist on its own way. How tender of God to call Jeremiah before he is even in his mother's womb. His life and our lives is no accident. God places us here. God places us here with a purpose. God calls us – I tried to think about this – sometimes I think about God's call is something that is hard and daunting and fierce, and I separate it from God's love. I think, "Well, maybe if I don't do what God calls me to do, then God will love me anyway," but maybe they aren't really separate. Maybe God's call is the love. Maybe it is because God loves us so much that God calls us and gives us hard task in a difficult vocation. Maybe the call itself is God's most profound kind of love. It is the offer of a meaningful life.

When Paul writes to the Christians in Corinth, he's not writing to just an individual, he's writing to that cantankerous church. He's writing to the Body of Christ. He is asking what God is calling them to do. He loves the church so much he calls them to love. Our church has a strategic plan that's in the process of unfolding, and I'm excited about it. It's got a lot of stuff in there for the poor. It's got a lot of stuff in there about us learning and growing. It's got a lot of

stuff about our caring for our facilities here and so many things connecting with people of other faiths.

Jeremiah's hesitation, it's interesting, isn't it? God calls him to speak on behalf of God, and Jeremiah says "I do not know how to speak because I am only a youth" and many of us in this room might say, "I do not know how to speak about God because I'm only a 75-year-old" or a 50-year-old or a 30-year-old. How do we say something about our faith, even to ourselves? How do we explain even to ourselves what we believe about God, much less to someone else? We're trying to work on this this year.

Jeremiah's language is interesting. For those to be called by God, there is some hard work to be done. When God speaks of his call to Jeremiah, he uses this language, to pluck up and to break down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant. It reminds me again of something that I've read to you before, but I just always love it. Marianne Williamson once wrote these words:

When you ask God into your life you think God is going to come into your psychic house, look around and see that you must need a new floor or better furniture and that everything needs just a little cleaning.

And so you go along for the first six months thinking how nice life is now that God is there. Then you look out the window one day and you see that there's a wrecking ball outside. It turns out that God actually thinks your whole foundation is shot and you're going to have to start over from scratch. The foundation is God's love. The foundation of your life is not something you build starting today. The foundation has already been there before you were even in your mother's womb. Imagine that. God built the foundation of your life and established what it could be. And it's not that you discover God today. You discover that God has been there all along. The foundation of our church has been set long ago by the love of God. We don't come and discover that God is here. God has always been here. God placed us here. God placed us here to love, to hear God's call...Because of love, we hope and we go.

Thanks be to God.

Amen . . .