Have you ever felt unwelcomed before? Whether you’re moving into a new neighborhood, immigrating from another country, starting a new job or a new school, attending a party where you only know a handful of people, or even walking into a new church…that could be a daunting and scary experience as well. I’m sure we all have incidents like that where we would feel like we were not welcomed by others. Many teenagers also have to face peer pressure about not fitting “IN” to the crowd. This occurs everyday in our schools.

 In the passages that we read earlier, we also came across a couple of prophets who were not “fitting in” to the crowd. They were being chased out by others because of who they were and what they had to say. The crowd didn’t like to hear the message, so they wanted to kill the messengers. That’s exactly what happened to a young Jeremiah and Jesus who had just launched his public ministry. They were rookies on their first days on the job!!!

 It is not easy to have a prophetic voice, especially when they had something important to say and the people simply didn’t want to hear it. But the prophets had their jobs to do. Their jobs were to be the messengers between God and God’s people. Sometimes they brought good news and sometimes bad news. Being a prophet was certainly not an easy calling, as they put their lives at risk every day. Someone had to be the bad guy to bring the bad news to the people.

 Jeremiah was a young prophet who was on a mission to *“****pluck up and to pull down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant****.”[[1]](#footnote-1)* He was only 13 when the word of the LORD came upon him that he was to be a messenger between God and God’s people. Imagine that? A 13 year-old standing up and delivering words of wisdom, vision and judgement from God, in a room full of elders, who could be his grandfathers or even great-grandfathers. What credibility and credential does he have? Talk about lack of respect for someone who answered the call to be leaders amongst God’s people.

 But God reassured the young Jeremiah that he would never be alone. He shall NOT to be discouraged in spite of his youthfulness, even though Jeremiah had tried to resist God’s calling…like many prophets did, like Jonah, Isaiah, and even Moses. Why me God? Why me? Not now God, I’m still young or I’m too old! I don’t want to deal with all the responsibilities. I don’t have time for all these meetings? Call somebody else instead? Anyone but me!!! *How often have we used these excuses to resist God’s calling in our lives?*

 Jeremiah was called to be a prophet for the southern kingdom of Judah who was in exile at the time while under the captivity of the Babylonians for more than 70 years. When Jeremiah spoke to the people pleading for their repentance and turning back to God, the people not only did not want to listen, they wanted to chase him out. But God re-assured Jeremiah’s calling that even though he was still young, God had known him even before he was formed in his mother’s womb and that God would be with him throughout this whole ordeal. **Jeremiah did not have to choose God, because God had chosen Jeremiah!**

 ***"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. 8 Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you”,[[2]](#footnote-2)*** said the LORD. God would put words in Jeremiah’s mouth when he went before the people to deliver God’s message of Hope, Deliverance, and even Judgement.

 In the same way as we read in our New Testament lesson today, Jesus, who had just been baptized and was sent immediately into the wilderness to be tested by Satan, found himself standing amongst the leaders of the synagogue. The crowd knew Jesus ever since he was a little boy. Jesus stood up, rolled up the scroll and began reading from Isaiah, ***"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."[[3]](#footnote-3)***

 Many, I’m sure, were wondering what was going on? Who was this man? Wasn’t he Joseph’s son, we’ve known him since he was a little boy? Those elders in the synagogue showed little or no respect to this 30-year, son of the carpenter. But as you and I know, Jesus was more than that!

 Jesus was not only a prophet from God, but in the eyes of the religious leaders, He was a blasphemous troublemaker. He challenged the authority of the religious establishment. Jesus didn’t care whether He was being welcomed by others or not, for He knew where the ultimate authority rests. **Jesus’s proclamation was a message a liberation both for Himself and for those who have been oppressed and marginalized.** Jesus came to preach the good news to the poor, to proclaim freedom to the captives, recover the sight to the blind, and release of the oppressed.[[4]](#footnote-4) That was all that matters to Him. His mission was focused upon God’s Kingdom, and not be driven or influenced by earthly circumstances.

Come to think of it, ***How many times have WE shoved Jesus out of town, taken Him OFF our calling list, un-friended Him on Facebook, un-invited Him in our homes or perhaps even in God’s house?*** How many times has Jesus been knocking at the doors of our hearts but yet we’ve refused to open those doors for Him to enter or to slam the door at His face? We have not welcomed Jesus like we should. We’ve failed to roll out the red-carpet for Him.

 Furthermore, **God has called us not only to listen to the prophetic voice among us but also to BE that prophetic voice and to live prophetic lives in our communities.** All of us are called to be God’s instrument of peace and agent of love. As we’ve talked about in the past couple of weeks, we have been given many gifts that we must use in order to serve God and to serve others. This is part of our calling as well, to be the prophets of our time and our place today.

 As Christians, **we are called to live IN the world but not OF the world**. It’s important that we engage with the various public issues and concerns of our time. This year being a presidential election year, we will have plenty of opportunities to hear debates over various social issues and concerns from now all the way till Election Day. From healthcare reform, immigration reform, humanitarian refugee crises, economic disparity between those who have and have not, race relations, domestic violence, gun controls…just to name a few, we all have our civil responsibilities as citizens of this city, state and this nation but more importantly, we are also citizens of God’s Kingdom and we must bear the responsibilities of our callings as well.

 Furthermore, our national church – the *Presbyterian Church (USA)*, will also be gathering this June in Portland, Oregon to prayerfully discern the role of the church upon various issues that are around us, as members of society and as God’s called community of faith, hope, and love. All in all, **this affirms our calling as God’s people, to speak prophetically in a world that is so desperately and more alarmingly in need of a Savior.**

Inevitably, there will be times when we will be rejected and shoved the exit doors by others around us, but that’s OK. When He was not being welcomed, Jesus simply passed them by and went on His way,[[5]](#footnote-5) shaking off the dust of His sandals and moving on to the next town.[[6]](#footnote-6)

 But that should not discourage us from living a life and proclaiming the message that God has called for each of us today. As the Apostle Peter wrote to encourage the early church that we should ***“always be ready to make our defense to anyone who demands from us, an accounting for the hope that is in us [through Jesus Christ] ; yet do it with gentleness and reverence.”[[7]](#footnote-7)***

God has called each one of us to be “prophets” and “prophetesses” of our time, in order to bear witness to the radical gospel of Christ through our faithful obedience in this world.[[8]](#footnote-8) We must, therefore, live up to our own individual and collective calling by carrying out God’s mission here on earth and be the transforming agents of God’s grace in people’s lives.

 What message is God challenging us to hear and to take action today? What stands are WE going to take when it comes to issues of our time and concerns of our community? How may we proclaim the message of “Welcome” amongst the people of God, not just those who are already in but those who have been looking in and knocking at our doors on the outside.

 This is all part of God’s calling and ultimate challenge for us today. Through our baptism, we have been equipped with the various gifts of the Holy Spirit. We have been commissioned to proclaim the good news of the Lord’s favor as the welcomed prophets. The world that appears to be without hope is in need of a savior and WE can be that prophetic voice to lead them to the Savior.

 In the name of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, Amen.

1. *Jeremiah 1:10* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. *Jeremiah 1:7-8* [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. *Luke 4:18* [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. *Luke 4:18* [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. *Luke 4:30* [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. *Mark 6:11* [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. *I Peter 3:15* [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. David, James Calvin Feasting on the Word Year C, Volume 1, P.290 [↑](#footnote-ref-8)