



*Jeremiah was a bullfrog, he was a good friend of mine.
I never understood a single word he said but I helped him drink
his wine. He always had some mighty fine wine. Sing it. Joy to the
world...all the boys and girls now, joy to the fishies in the deep blue
sea and joy to you and me.¹*

Jeremiah – the one we heard about today - wasn't a bullfrog but many people of his time didn't understand a single word he said-
or perhaps more accurately didn't want to understand what he said.

And, it certainly wasn't a time that many were saying "joy to the world."
Israel was being carried off to Babylon and others went into exile in Egypt.
The Temple –
the place where God resided-
was destroyed.

The people were lost.
In the midst of this confusion, chaos and destruction, Jeremiah said what God told him to say anyway.

Some might have thought that what Jeremiah was saying was influenced by too much wine. But the scripture we heard today is typical of the call by God to a prophet.

Think about Moses:
time and time again God said to Moses, you're the man –
and Moses came up with excuse after excuse,
including that Moses stammered.
Aaron, the brother of Moses, was the solution to that excuse.
God answered every excuse Moses could come up with.

Finally, after running out of a myriad of reasons why he couldn't possibly be God's messenger, Moses accepted that God was calling him to speak God's word to the people.

¹ *Joy to the World*. Words Hoyt Ashton; music Three Dog Night (1971).

We see a similar reluctance on the part of Gideon, Isaiah and Jeremiah.

Being a prophet was risky business.
At the least, you were considered delusional.
You might even be exiled, as Jeremiah was.
You were likely lonely-
set apart, speaking God's words, not your own.

Generally a prophet was called by God because God's people had strayed from the way they were to live.

So a prophet was, almost by definition, someone who told you that you were wrong.

None of us like to hear that we've screwed up.
We tend to push back –
to discount what we're being told.
We look for almost any reason to say the messenger is wrong and we're right.

What distinguishes a prophet from other people is that the prophet speaks God's words-not the prophet's own words:

"Then the Lord put out his hand and touched my mouth; and the Lord said to me, 'Now I have put my words in your mouth.'"

The prophet is compelled to speak.
It isn't a choice, despite the potential –
even likelihood –
of being shunned and discounted.

Similarly, a prophet could be called at any time of life.

Moses was an adult, married and with children, according to Exodus.

Jeremiah was a boy.

Age is not an impediment.

God is with the prophet; the words the prophet speaks are those put there by God.

Echoes of what Jesus later tells the disciples:

Do not be afraid.
The Holy Spirit will tell you what to say.

George Martin, a retired Episcopal priest, notes that

the reasons for not doing something that relates to God's work are often reasonable and justifiable.

Most of us are not trained for these tasks, or if trained, we are ill prepared.

Yet if God's call is about skills or experience, Goddoes not say,

'Don't worry, I have a trade school for prophets. You will get it all there.'
Instead, God says, 'Do not be afraid...'²

Martin goes on to say that

² George H. Martin in Feasting on the Word, Year C, volume 1 (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2009) 292.

‘fear not’ is an offer of salvation and a promise of protection. ...
At the heart of this call,
and maybe of every call,
is the Twenty-third Psalm all over again.
‘Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear
no evil.’
That means that God will shadow me, not death.

The call of any of the prophets points up the tension between our concept of free will and the omnipotence of God.

If God has all power, otherwise known as omnipotence, then what free will do we really have?

If we have no true ability to choose “yes” or “no”, then aren’t we just puppets moving at God’s decision.

One answer to that quandary is that God *chooses* not to exercise all power, enabling humans to truly say “yes” or “no.”

God probably pushes us,
like God pushed Moses and God pushed Jeremiah to find the courage to accept the call to be a witness to God in the world.

Belief in God’s shadowing of us,
caring for us,
loving us even when we are pretty unlovable,
means we can step out in faith to speak the word of truth,
to fight for justice and peace,
and to promote the dignity of every human being.

God is made known to us in the breaking of the bread and in the drinking of the wine.

Each week when we come forward to the altar, we accept the call of God, through Christ, on our lives.

Each week, when we come forward to the altar, we are renewed and refreshed through communion with God in the elements of the bread and wine.

Indeed, the words of Eucharistic Prayer C asks God to “deliver us from the presumption of coming to this Table for solace only, and not for strength; for pardon only and not for renewal” (BCP, 372).

God is with us –
in the good and in the hard times of our life.
We, too, resist the call of God.

Not because we are called to be a prophet like Moses, Gideon or Jeremiah.
But often because following the call means living a life that may be out of step with those around us.

It means speaking out when we might rather be silent.

It means giving of our resources to help others when we, ourselves, might be feeling the pinch of not enough for the life we want to live.

God is with us,

even when things happen to us that aren't fair-

aren't what we thought God was calling us to be or to do.

Trust, then, that God is with us and step out in faith.

Let us pray:

We praise you, Lord God, who gives us life. In our rejoicing, you are God. In our grief, you are God. In anguish and in deliverance alike, we praise you. In darkness and in light, we affirm our faith. We bow our heads before you, the Eternal One, who is with us always. **Amen.**