

# God Is Ready

Jeremiah 1:4-10

First Presbyterian Church, Champaign, Illinois  
Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost, 25 August 2019  
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Have you ever felt like you will ill-equipped to do something? Have you ever found yourself in a position in which you felt out of your league?

- There's the boy in the batter's box shaking in his cleats because the 5<sup>th</sup> grade pitcher on the mound is almost six feet tall and has the beginnings of a beard.
- There's the teacher fresh out of college, standing in front of a real class of real children. (Our son, Ben, is in that situation right now as the brand new band director of Woodmont High School in Piedmont, SC. What a scary, wonderful time.)
- There's the new hand at the helm nosing a 65-foot trawler into the channel by feel, in heavy fog, for the first time.
- There's the new pilot in the cockpit, in the plane, on the catapult, on deck, engine screaming.
- There's the preacher standing up on her very first Sunday morning in the pulpit and the second row, and the third row, and part of the fourth row are full of family; though she's written her sermon and practiced it fifteen times in front of the bathroom mirror, she feels in over her head.
- There's the man who has been asked to serve as an elder in the church; he's flattered, but a nominating committee certainly could not have been thinking clearly—*not me, I'm not ready, and, certainly, I'm not worthy.* (Could that be you?)

How do you get the Carnegie Hall? Practice, practice, practice. So, she practices and practices and practices. And even though she's ready, even though she can nail every song she'll play, when she's heading for the stage, she thinks to herself, I'm not ready.

A woman in labor and delivery is at the beginning of the birthing process. *That eight pound baby has to come out?* It's a fleeting thought, but it comes, it comes even though it's not the only thought and certainly not the truest thought, but it comes: *I'm just not ready.*

You're grieving the loss of your beloved. There's no need to rush grief, but it might be time for the next step. Not surprisingly you hear yourself say, "I'm not ready."

You're on the cusp of a new thing and you feel a nervous wave roil through your stomach. *I'm not ready. I'm not good enough. It's not a good time. It's too soon, or too late. I'm too old; I've had my chance. It's somebody else's turn. The weight is too great. I'm too young.*

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"I'm in too deep." Moses said something like that when God called. Jonah said I can't go to Ninevah, that's ridiculous. Annanias wasn't sure he could go into that room and face Saul who was blind and confused from that encounter on the Damascus Road. Jesus himself said, "Let the cup pass me by."

Jesus may have been ready to heal the crooked woman. The crooked woman may have been ready to be healed. The crowd in the synagogue may have been ready. But we note is a reading today from Luke that the religious leaders weren't ready. *It's not time. We're not ready for the messiah. We're not ready to give up our power. We're not ready for change.*

People of faith, including our spiritual heroes, have all said some version of what Jeremiah says in his call story: “Ah Lord God. Truly I do not know how to speak, for I am only a child.”

In other words, *“I’m not ready.”*

But being “ready” is not always (even, ever) a prerequisite for answering God’s call. It’s not about our readiness to follow, but God’s readiness to ask. It seems to me that when God calls, we can say “yes.” We can say “yes” (with confidence) not because we are ready for the call, but because God is ready to issue the call.

When God calls us to do something, God gives us the wherewithal to get it done. The readiness comes. In Jeremiah’s case, God touched his lips, a sign of being given the words, a sign of being cleansed and made ready.

If we believe that God will sustain us in difficult times, then we can say “yes” to God’s call, because we don’t have to do it alone. With God’s call comes the promise: “I am with you always, even to the close of the age.”

If we rely only on ourselves, we’re on shaky ground. But if we rely on God, we can be appointed “over nations and over kingdoms.” The fear we may feel, need not overwhelm us. While we might be shaking, the God who has called us is steady, and no dark place can extinguish God’s fire.

Age doesn’t matter. If God calls, there is no too-young or too-old.

Intellect doesn’t matter. If God is giving the grace, God will use our high or low IQ for glory.

Timing doesn’t matter. They told Jesus it was illegal to heal on the sabbath. Jesus asked, “Since when is doing God’s will illegal?”

Physical ability doesn’t matter. If God says “Go to Ninevah,” then God will send a means of passage that will get us there.

If it’s all up to me to carry out God’s call, I rightly fear that I am not ready. I’m not able. But if it’s truly God’s call, God will work through even my feeble efforts. God will work through me and use me and great things that I may never know or see will happen through me. Why? *Because God is able.*

*God is able.* That’s the only reason I’m your minister. I didn’t come here because I thought “I could do it.” I’m here because I know that God can do it. And I want to be a part of what God is doing and what God is going to do in this place.

It’s possible that Jeremiah wasn’t encouraged by God’s comforting words. *Yes, God, you knew me before I was born, but that doesn’t change my hope that you’ll choose someone else. I’m too old. I’m too young. I’m too busy. I’m too unworthy. I’m not ready.*

But notice that God’s implied question is not, “Hey Jeremiah, are you ready?” It’s this: “Hey Jeremiah, will you be faithful?”

I pray, that with God’s help, when God calls us, we all can say—even in a whisper—YES. *I’ll do it. Help me, God, and I will follow. Thanks be to you, O God, for you have called me to do something good for your world. Guide my steps. Hold my hand. Lead me on.*