

To Your Soul Be True: The Soul's Whisper (Beyond the Masks)
Jeremiah 1:4-10

I want to invite you to think for a moment about how you might introduce yourself to someone you just met. What do you say? Normally, we share things like our name, our profession, where we're from, or what we're doing in that specific location. But as we get to know people more deeply, the conversation often goes deeper. There are special people in our lives with whom we can share our true selves and hearts. Yet, the greatest blessing is when we experience our **true essence**, the core of who we are as children of God. That essence is referred to as the **soul**, which is part of the divine and truly who we are. Once we find this connection, all things fall into place, and we can see and experience life on a much deeper level. Instead of living on the surface, we get to experience life more fully.

This was the experience of the prophet Jeremiah. He connected to the divine source of all life and saw his own life through the lens of God's love for the world. A prophet was someone who spoke God's word to others. Prophets didn't foretell the future to predict what was coming next. They were people who knew how to connect with their **soul**, the divine light within them, and from that place, they spoke God's word to transform people's behavior. They understood that to transform and heal human behavior, people first needed to connect with the light of God within them. They knew their moral promptings and callings would fall on deaf ears if people didn't first know their souls.

Yet, prophets were also just like us. Most of them were reluctant to accept God's call. Jeremiah had to experience God's divine presence first before embracing his own calling. He initially resisted, saying he didn't know how to speak. Then he claimed he was too young for such a task. Just like Moses when he was called into ministry, Jeremiah felt inadequate. Jeremiah knew the call to be a prophet wouldn't be easy, and he wasn't sure he was up for the job! He would have to speak whatever God told him, even if it upset the people and their leaders. Not only that, but God called Jeremiah during a difficult time in Israel's history. It was when the people of Israel were about to fall under the control of the Babylonians, a rising and far more powerful nation. It would be like God asking someone to become the mayor of a city about to be destroyed. Who would want that dubious honor and dreadful responsibility? Imagine being a teenage boy receiving that kind of call!

But Jeremiah's faith was strong, and his connection to his soul grew stronger by the day. He grew up with a priest for a father, and his grandfather was also a priest. He knew God and prayer from an early age. He must have loved God deeply, but perhaps his sense of call was more along the safe lines of being a priest—reading scriptures and performing religious rituals. That would have been a much safer path, and certainly more admired among the people. Instead, Jeremiah received a call to be a prophet. And

indeed, the call he received proved to be a very difficult one. There were plots to assassinate him (Jeremiah 11:18-12:6). Other prophets contradicted his message (Jeremiah 28, 29). He was attacked by his own brothers, beaten, and imprisoned. When Jerusalem finally fell in 587 BCE, Jeremiah was released from prison.

Yet, through it all, Jeremiah remained **faithful**. He never lost his sense of call to be a prophet because **Jeremiah knew his own soul**. All the circumstances around him screamed, “Just give it up, there’s no point!” But deep within him, the prophet knew that God was with him, and somehow that was enough. His approval ratings, his personal safety, and his career path all seemed to not matter enough to keep him from his mission. What would make someone go through all of this? Let’s listen to our scripture for today from Jeremiah 1:4-10:

Now the word of the Lord came to me saying,
5 “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you,
and before you were born I consecrated you;
I appointed you a prophet to the nations.”
6 Then I said, “Ah, Lord God! Truly I do not know how to speak, for I am only a boy.”
7 But the Lord said to me,
“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,
says the Lord.”
9 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.
10 See, today I appoint you over nations and over kingdoms,
to pluck up and to pull down,
to destroy and to overthrow,
to build and to plant.”

These words express the mystical experiences Jeremiah had that led him to know his soul. I believe the key to Jeremiah’s deep endurance and faith is found in the words of verse 5: “Before I formed you in the womb, **I knew you**.” In the Hebrew language, the word for knowing here means a very intimate kind of knowing - a knowing that includes body, soul, and mind. What carried Jeremiah through the ups and downs of his ministry and his life was knowing God so intimately, not just in his mind, but also in his heart, soul, and body. This is what God gave to the people in the commandments during the time of Moses: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might” (Deuteronomy 6:5). This is what Jesus quoted later when asked about the most important commandment in the Law of Moses. This is the

foundation of all life and faith. Without this kind of depth of love, it's hard to truly live life and respond to God's call of unconditional love for life and others.

If you want to change the world, to work for justice, and to change your own life, I believe the most important work you can do is opening yourself to God so that you may know God intimately, in the same way God knows you. One of the major hindrances to our ability to open ourselves so fully to God is our own mental images of God. It's hard to be intimate with God if we imagine God as a judge or an angry being who demands no mistakes or only perfect behavior and thoughts. In her book, *The Inner Compass*, Margaret Silf asks an important question: "Is your 'God' a policeman or a midwife? When you think of God, do you see a law-enforcement officer, determined to keep you on the straight and narrow, or do you see someone who knows you—and loves you, more than you know and love yourself—and is attending your birth into life-in-all-its-fullness?"

The invitation today is to put things in proper perspective by accessing our souls each day. **We are souls, and all of life is a spiritual experience.** We often think that spiritual experiences are limited to times of prayer and contemplation, but the truth is that nothing exists outside of God's presence. That's what Jeremiah was trying to share with his people. That's also what Jesus came to show.

This week, I invite you to spend time each day getting to know your soul—who you are in your true essence. Listen to the whispers of your soul each day. This is a journey, not a destination, but with each step, you will find yourself more deeply rooted in the love that knew you before you were even formed.

Meditation on Psalm 139:13-16

Let us now enter into a moment of quiet reflection, allowing the beautiful and profound words of Psalm 139 to resonate within us. As I read, close your eyes if you feel comfortable, and let these ancient words speak directly to your own innermost being.

For it was you who formed my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother's womb.

I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; that I know very well.

My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth.

Your eyes beheld my unformed substance. In your book were written all the days that were formed for me, when none of them as yet existed. (Psalm 139:13-16)

Take a deep breath. Inhale God's knowing love. Exhale any doubt or fear.

Consider the first lines: "For it was you who formed my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother's womb." Can you feel the tenderness, the deliberate artistry of God's hand in your very being? Before you took your first breath, before any moment of your life unfolded, you were known, you were formed, you were intricately created by divine love. This isn't just about physical creation; it's about your very essence, your unique soul. Allow yourself to truly *feel* that you were not an accident, but a beloved creation, purposefully designed.

"I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; that I know very well." Do you truly believe you are wonderfully made? In a world that often measures us by external achievements, by what we produce, or how we look, this verse reminds us of our intrinsic worth, our sacred design. Let that truth settle deep within your soul. You are a masterpiece of divine creation, worthy of love and respect simply because you *are*.

"My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. Your eyes beheld my unformed substance." Imagine God's gaze, full of infinite love and perfect intention, upon you even before you were fully formed. Every unique aspect of your personality, every potential, every challenge you would face, every joy you would experience—all of it was known and held in God's loving awareness. There is nothing about you, past, present, or future, that is hidden from God. And that knowing is not a judgment; it is a profound, compassionate, unconditional love that accepts you fully.

"In your book were written all the days that were formed for me, when none of them as yet existed." This speaks to a divine plan, a purpose for your life that was known even before you lived a single day. While we have free will and choices, there is a deeper current of divine intention guiding and supporting us. Trust in that deeper knowing. Trust that the very fabric of your being carries a sacred purpose.

As you go from this place, carry these words with you. Remind yourself that you are known, you are loved, and you are wonderfully made by a God who attends to your very birth into life in all its fullness. Listen for the whispers of your soul, for they are the echoes of God's eternal love for you, guiding you to be truly yourself. Amen.