

First Baptist Church of Augusta
January 31, 2010
Psalm: Psalm 71:1-6
Old Testament: Jeremiah 1:4-10
Epistle: 1 Corinthians 13:1-13
Why Are We Here? Created to Set Free

“Don’t I know you...?” Have any of you ever had the experience of someone noticing you, maybe at *Publix*, while holding up one tomato after another checking for ripeness, and you are asked, “Don’t I know you from somewhere?” Or you are strolling along the sidewalk in the town where you grew up and were schooled and met your spouse and someone notices you and says, “Aren’t you so-and-so’s child?”

Sometimes our “knowness” comes in the negative, like “I don’t know you anymore.” Disappointed eyes filled with loss say this to a partner who has betrayed their trust – “I don’t know you anymore.” Or angry exchanges between a parent and teenager and someone says, maybe both say, “I don’t know you.”

There are therapists and clients who sit face to face talking and listening, because the one on the symbolic couch does not know who they are anymore and is asking, “Who am I?” This question, by the way, comes to us all. What can be more unsettling than to look in the mirror and notice the crows-feet and age spots and weary eyes, and confess that we do not know who we are?

“*Before I formed you in the womb,*” so says YHWH to Jeremiah, “*I knew you...*” The LORD says this to Jeremiah, as God was calling him to the unwelcome job of truth-speaking *against* Judah and later on *for* Judah.

Good biblical exegesis necessitates that I say these words are to Jeremiah and not to us. We are not all called to be prophets to ancient Israel after all. Furthermore, Old Testament theologians like Walter Brueggemann and John Bright, will say that this particular verse is not even the important part of the passage. The meat of this passage is in the plucking up and tearing down portion that comes a few verses later.

Still, I am captivated with those early words of the LORD to Jeremiah, “*Before I formed you in the womb I knew you.*” I know they are directed to Jeremiah, but don’t you think it is okay to overhear them as our words too?

“I know you” was what God said to Moses, as Moses was bickering with God that he did not want to face Pharaoh, yet, we can almost feel those words penetrate our own stubborn heart as well. Then there are all those Psalms that sing and weep and wonder and marvel at God’s knowing us. I think the first two verses of Psalm 139 sum up all of our thoughts pretty well: *O LORD, you have searched me and known me. 2 You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you [know] my thoughts from far away.*

In a world where we are pushed, too often to the precipice of misunderstanding one another and ourselves, there can be such comfort that someone really knows us.

Then again, that can be terrifying. I keep a journal where from time to time I share mundane thoughts and observations. No one reads it but me, not even Amy. Sometimes I share my feelings, my doubts, and my fears. I am terrified at the thought, that when I drop dead, anyone can come by and read what I have written. Or, what about all those love letters Amy and I have stored up in our bedroom closet? No, I do not think that anyone, especially my own children, actually want to read them, but still they tell things that are intimate and personal. There are some things I just don’t want others to know. You are no different.