NIV **Jeremiah 1:4-5** The word of the LORD came to me, saying, 5 "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations."

 We are going to start this sermon just be speaking about Jeremiah. Jeremiah was, of course, a prophet of the Lord. His ministry extended through some 40 years of the history of Israel. This 40 years start out awesome because of King Josiah, but after that things go downhill real quick. King Josiah was awesome because during his reign the Book of the Law, in other words, the Word of God was found and Josiah tried to get the people back to God and back to the true faith of God. Once Josiah dies, the people quickly and readily desert God and his truth.

 Now the first thing that should strike you about what I have already said is that these people, people who were supposed to be God’s children and worshippers, had lost the Word of God! How do you do that? How do you pride yourself in being the children of God and you lose God’s Word? That will tell you that the reforms of Josiah were not well taken and not really grasped by the heart. For that matter for the past 60 years previous prophets of God had clearly warned that Israel would be taken into captivity by the Babylonians. And even despite the reforms attempted by Josiah, the people did not and would not listen. When Jeremiah continued to preach and teach this coming judgment of God, you can bet that his life, especially after the death of Josiah, got a bit tough.

 Why was it tough? After all, Israel was a religious nation. They called themselves “the children of God” and prided themselves on their history and on the Temple God had given them. The rituals, festivals, sacrifices, priesthood and so much more convinced them that they were special and unique to the world. They were very religious, very convinced that their religion and their God were tops. The problem was that they didn’t practice the religion God gave them. Much like today, they had taken the Word of God and said it meant things that God’s Word did not. And really, that is how they lost God’s Word. They were so wrapped up in what men said of the word, so wrapped up in men’s interpretation and understanding, in commentaries and rabbinical explanations that the actual Word of God was no longer pertinent or important, just what men said God said. Kind of sad. Very condemning!

 So God had told them and told them that they would be taken captive by the Babylonians and it would be that way for 80 years or so. Yet they didn’t believe it. Didn’t believe because all of the false prophets proclaimed that God’s prophets were wrong and evil men. The false prophets proclaimed that God loved them, God would protect them and deliver them, and God would bless them in every way. The false prophets were only upbeat and positive. None of this sinner stuff, none of this actually following God’s Word. Again, you can just imagine that Jeremiah’s life got pretty interesting.

 Jeremiah endured imprisonment, persecution and tradition has it, eventually died by stoning. Yet through all of this Jeremiah remained faithful and true to God. How? Because of God’s help and love. And for us today, that is the lesson I want you to grasp for today. For you see, I believe that what the Lord did for Jeremiah, he also does for us. Our theme will be: **THE LORD IS WITH US. 1st. He knows us. 2nd. He is with and rescues. 3rd. He gives His Word.**

 The words before us are from the time when the Lord called Jeremiah to be his servant, yes, to be his prophet. The Lord knew everything that would be and could be in Jeremiah’s life and so in this gracious calling of Jeremiah God gives him a few promises that are so wonderful and strengthening. What is awesome, is that as you study all of Scripture you would learn that what God reveals and promises Jeremiah are things extended to every one of his children. And what awesome and great promises they are.

 Look at the first thing God says to Jeremiah. **“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart, I appointed you as a prophet to the nations.”** Now, if you don’t consider those words deeply you might miss the wonder and joy here. So pay attention to what the Lord God says. He says a few things of great importance. First God says, **“Before I formed you…before you were born.”** Jeremiah was the product of the Lord. Jeremiah’s conception, birth, life and yes, even his death were all things of and from God. Here are words that are designed to remind you of one thing, you are the Lord’s. You owe him for who and what you are. You are here because he brought you into the world. You are what you are, because that’s the way God chose to bless you and make you. So whatever your circumstances, good or bad, easy or tough, you need to grasp that the grace, goodness and love of God is behind it.

 There is more. God says, **“I knew you…I set you apart…I appointed you.”** Do you not grasp that the Almighty God is behind your life? More than that, it is rather clear that he is directing and guiding that life. Contemplate this: God knows you. He knows who you are and what you are. He knows your strengths, weaknesses, and everything else there is to know. He knows you better than you know you. I do not believe for a moment that God would hurt or harm you in any way, but that God will always work for your eternal good.

 God set you apart, God appointed you. That means that God understands your abilities and capabilities. I have no doubt that God has directed you to everything that is good and right, to everything that will lead to your eternal blessing and salvation. God has his place for you. Now if you have abandoned that place…If you have rejected God’s directions and plans for you…if you have decided to do everything contrary to God in every way (which by the way is exactly what our sinful nature wants) then you need to grasp that you are going against the love of God. You are where you are at for the honor and glory of God but if you have done nothing but bring shame and disgrace to God that is not God’s fault. So, if you determined you would be a drunk or drug addict, don’t blame God. God knew your weakness. But God also knew that He had given you the ability to overcome, to fight against and to not fall into those horrors. Our job is to hear and follow God.

 Of course, that leads us to our next thought. God says, **“Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you and will rescue you.”** Get this, God knew the difficulties, trials, hardships and downright ugliness that would arise in Jeremiah’s life. Here is God just telling him to keep moving. Don’t be afraid. Don’t let this world turn you away from God or determine that God is the monster because you have some hard things happening. God knows and God is with you. He will give you the strength you need. He has equipped you to stand your ground and serve Him. God, we are told, will rescue us.

 A little bit more needs to be said here. Jeremiah was imprisoned and persecuted harshly. Jeremiah would eventually, according to tradition, be murdered by stoning. And yet it says here that God will rescue him. Please know that God did. On the physical level, as what was going on was going on, God gave Jeremiah strength, endurance and a spirit of victory in this world. On a spiritual level, God does much the same thing. And finally, when Jeremiah’s course was run, when the race was finished, when he was called home, that’s just where he went. Home. Home to be with God. Home to the joys and wonders of eternal life and salvation in heaven. Home because God rescued him through the promises of a Savior. God rescues us in the same way.

 For us, I believe that God watches over us and guides our every path. I believe that God never gives us more than we can bear and that should hardship or troubles arise, God helps us endure and overcome whatever it is before us. Most important, I believe that God sent His Son to be our Savior from sin. In Jesus God grants us eternal life and victory. In Jesus, God forgives our sins and clothes us with righteousness forever and ever. But note what I said. This is in Jesus. Don’t tell me you believe in Jesus and then whimper about your life. Don’t tell me you believe in Jesus and then live absolutely contrary to what God says is right and good. Don’t tell me you have faith, when it is clear that your faith is in your foolish belief that you are calling the shots and that you can do whatever you want! That is not faith. That is false faith. Faith needs to be in Jesus, to grasp what Jesus has done for you and continues to do for you. Faith is driven and guided by God’s Word and wonder. Faith serves God in whatever way God has given and with the abilities that God has given. Faith does this because of Jesus and the salvation, the rescue he provides. Faith lives for Jesus. That’s the part of this promise that says, **”I am with you.”** True faith has Jesus.

 Then there is our final point for today. God says, **“Now, I have put my words in your mouth.”** I especially treasure this one because it becomes the measure for our lives. Listen to what God does just before these words: **“Then the Lord reached out his hand and touched my mouth and said to me.”** God wants us to have his word. God makes it possible for his Word to be in and with us. God has done all of this for us and because of His great love for us. And what is the importance of His Word?

 His Word is how we know Him and His Ways! We cannot grasp God apart from his Word. We cannot fathom him, understand him, marvel in him or even see him unless God opens our hearts and minds through the power of his Word. His Word is what brings us the Holy Spirit. 2nd Thess 2:14 in speaking of faith says, **“He called you to this through our gospel, that you might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.”**

 The Word is Jesus. The Word reveals God’s love and fills us with God’s Spirit. The Word is our guide and help, our confidence and sure salvation. God’s Word is not some sort of obscure, hard to read thing, but rather clear, concise and certain in its proclamations. The Word is what fills us with Jesus, gives us faith, strengthens our faith, keeps us in the faith and yes, pours God’s Holy Spirit upon us. We know God’s truth because of his Word. We know God’s love because of his Word. We know God’s will because of his Word. We are God’s children, heirs of eternal life and salvation, forgiven, restored, rescued and sanctified…..because of God’s Word. We know these words are true, because of God’s Word. Never give up on or cast aside God’s Word for He is the power of salvation to all who believe.

 Dear people, the blessings that got Jeremiah and many other servants of God through, are yours. Rejoice in his love. Know his power and promises. Hear and believe His Word and these things are yours. Amen.