

Sunday, 2/3/19

Sermon: Who? Me?

Robin Wells

There was a time in my young life when I was actually an inspiration to my own Dad. He had spent a great deal of time and energy on me growing up, encouraging me to follow God and serve community. I was continually prompted to be discerning about the choices that I made in my life, and I was also shaped by our loving church community that was full of teachers. Eventually, I too joined the ranks of the teaching profession, and my Dad, inspired by my efforts, went back to school, and for a brief time he became a substitute. My dad acted on this new calling in his life during a time in which the flip phone cellphone was a new thing. He would also wear shirts with a breast pocket, and it seemed like everyday and sometimes multiple times a day, I would get an accidental phone call from my dad. Sometimes I would miss an accidental call, other times I would pick up the phone to say hello and there was no response. And then there would be the times my dad would look at his phone log, see my phone number listed multiple times, and he would call me thinking that I had been calling him! “No, Dad, your phone has been calling *me* all day.” “Oh. So how’s it goin’?” Sometimes, my dad’s phone would accidentally call me and I could hear what was going on at his end and one day his phone called me in the middle of my dad teaching a lesson to kindergarteners. I could hear him saying, “The sun rises in the west! Where does the sun rise?” and the kindergarteners would shout, “In the west!” And not quite sure that I had heard him correctly, I continued to listen. Then he said, “The sun sets in east! Where does the sun set?” “In the east!” The kids shouted. Oh, my God. The call and response technique my dad was using was working for my dad, but the content of the information he was giving, was just plain wrong. So I hung up the phone and called him back. “Oh, Hello, Robbie!” He said. “I was just in the middle of teaching kindergarteners north, south, east and west.” “I know that. Your phone called me and I heard you telling the kids that the sun sets in the east. So I’m calling you back to make sure you’re not having a stroke or a And here I was, his own child, giving him directions on teaching children directions. I have no doubt that those kids learned something even better than compass directions that day. They learned the joy of call and response. Throughout the Bible we learn of the many ways that God calls God’s people. Sometimes God calls a community, other times it is a call to an individual to lead a community. And

the call narrative of Jeremiah should give us pause and prompt us to consider how it is that we answer God when God is calling. It might be helpful for you to know that Jeremiah is a pastor's kid. And it's not that Jeremiah is a token representative for all kids that grow up with a pastor parent, but it does help us to understand that Jeremiah's response to God calling him into service was hesitant. Jeremiah gives God two excuses for not doing what God wants him to do. He says: I don't have the words and I'm too young. However, God has the very best responses to our own doubts about ourselves. God has an answer for Jeremiah being without words "I will give you words." God has an answer for Jeremiah saying he is too young. "Don't say that." Not only does God promise to equip him with the words he will need but God will tell him when to hold his tongue too. And boy! Isn't that a gift? Couldn't we use some divinely inspired tongue holding in the world right now? Couldn't God just bind up the tongues of wall-mongers and loosen the tongues of the bridgebuilders? May it be so. God says to Jeremiah do not be afraid of what I am calling you to do! I am so very present and so very near to your heart that my word is in you. And that means you have work to do. That work is to "pluck up and pull down." God calls us to harvest what is ripe for the picking my friends. And what is ripe for the picking everyday are the fruits of the spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and selfcontrol. That work is to "destroy and overthrow," which is what Jesus has done for us by disrupting sin and conquering death. That work is to "build and to plant," --to make all things a new creation. While God can and has done this work alone, God chooses not to. And most importantly, God chooses you. God chooses me. God even chooses people we don't like to still be vessels of God's word. What a grace that is! Because in Jesus we are all invited to the table of grace. We are all invited into one love, one table, one joy, one peace. So let us once more say yes to that invitation, and in response offer all that we are and all that we have to the one God whose word dwells within us. Let's pray together our call and response prayer of confession as it is found in our order of worship