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GOD WANTS YOU!

by Pastor Clarissa Martinelli

Jeremiah 1:4-10

Adapted from sermon: I Want You – Wordpress sermons.

It was a lifetime ago, way back in 1916, that a certain strange man began making appearances all over the United States. He looked to be an OLDER man – with white hair, a fluffy goatee, and bushy eyebrows. He was always dressed in the same odd clothes – striped pants, a loose blue coat, a red bow tie, and a top hat with a big blue star. The most memorable thing of all, however, was his message – with eyes staring intently at his audience and a bony finger out-thrust, he liked to say, “I WANT YOU FOR THE U. S. ARMY!” His name, of course, was Uncle Sam. Though he lived only in cartoons and on posters, he was a compelling figure! Many people including many members here today answered his call and enlisted in the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Coast Guard or some other military service during the great Wars and recent conflicts.

This morning, I am here to issue you a similar SUMMONS far more important, far more urgent than Uncle Sam’s... for I am speaking to you, not on behalf of the United States Military, but in the name of the ALMIGHTY GOD!

Here is the message: God says, “I WANT YOU!” – YES, you! You there in the back row, sinking low to make yourself invisible. Yes, you youth... you seasoned Christians! And you timid souls that never volunteer...and you busy ones who never seem to have the time.

God wants YOU to be His soldiers. He wants to entrust to you a vital MESSAGE that will literally change the lives of those who receive it. Don’t think this is MY idea, for I, too, am only a messenger. It is GOD’S IDEA, as St. Paul made clear long ago to the Corinthians: **We are ambassadors for Christ, God making HIS appeal through US!**

God wants you for His MESSENGERS. So what’s the message? Simply this: God has sent a Savior down here behind enemy lines. His name is Jesus. He died to forgive our sins, and He was raised to life again. Everyone who puts his trust in Jesus will receive eternal life. You know it, don’t you? You believe it too, don’t you? But I preach this sermon to remind you of something many of us forget; it is a

LIFE OR DEATH MATTER! Those who die without hearing it, without believing it, WILL BE LOST ETERNALLY... just as surely as those poor people from Hurricane Sandy still need our support and help. Since that is true, it is a matter of GREAT URGENCY that we deliver this message!

Many years ago lived a young woman named Miss Manning. She had fallen in love with a young man who had gone to serve as a missionary to India. One day, she received a letter from him, asking her to marry him. "If you do not answer," he said in the letter, "I will take it as your refusal." She wasted no time in writing her eager acceptance. She sealed the envelope, and since it was a very rainy day, her brother offered to take it to the post office.... Time passed. But Miss Manning never heard from her lover... or even saw him again! The report reached her that he had later married someone else. For 20 years thereafter, she remained single and lived in grief. One day, as she went through an old trunk, sorting through clothing, she found her brother's coat...and in one pocket, her letter, now yellowed with age...IT HAD NEVER BEEN DELIVERED!

God has taken a similar risk in giving us the task of delivering his MESSAGE OF LOVE IN CHRIST. Have we delivered it? Or has it remained in our pockets? Only you can answer that question. To my shame, I must confess that sometimes, I have not delivered my message. What about you? And if we are honest enough to admit that, can we be bold enough to explore the reasons why?

The text from Jeremiah may help us with such a look in the mirror. Jeremiah stood before God's enlistment poster. He saw the finger pointed at him. He heard God say, "I WANT YOU!" But Jeremiah refused to enlist. **Ah, Lord God**, he said, **I do not know how to speak, for I am only a youth!**

Haven't we said the same? "Ah, Lord God, I am the WRONG AGE! I'm too old a dog to learn new tricks...too old to be bothered with telling people about Christ; I'm having enough trouble keeping myself heaven bound!" "Ah, Lord God, I'm too young. I haven't learned enough... and nobody would pay attention to me anyway!" We say other things too..."Ah, Lord, you know I have no TALENT. I stumble over my words. I'm too tall and gangly... too short and dumpy. Too scared – I'd freeze up and feel stupid. Too sinful – how could I encourage anyone if I've failed so often?"

We finish our habitual excuses, and there comes a SILENCE. And we see that God is still there, like the poster of Uncle Sam. God already knows it all. God has heard it all. Yet still His finger points at us. Still, He says, "I WANT YOU!"

You see, there is no one else to call. If God were to eliminate those who are too OLD or too YOUNG or too UNITED METHODIST or too PROTESTANT or too UNTALENTED or too FEARFUL or too SINFUL...there would be no one left at all!

Read the roster of GREAT PEOPLE IN THE BIBLE, and you will hear them make the same excuses we do...

Moses said he wasn't a good speaker.

David was a runt.

Isaiah had a foul mouth.

Gideon apologized for his unimpressive family.

Sarah laughed because she was post-menopausal.

Jonah just didn't want to go, so he ran away.

But God used them all...and He used Jeremiah, too. In every case He brushed away the objections: 'I AM GOD. I WILL EQUIP YOU!' He reminded Jeremiah of the three P's.

The first P is for PLAN. **Before you were born, Jeremiah, I consecrated you to be a prophet.**

The second P stands for PROVISION. **Then the Lord put forth his hand and touched my mouth and said to me, "Behold, I have put my words in your mouth."** No more excuses, Jeremiah!

The third P stands for PRESENCE. **"Be not afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you," says the Lord.**

God offers these three P's to you and me through Jesus Christ today.

God has PLANS for us!

Ephesians 1: **God chose us in him before the foundation of the world.**

God has plans – particular, detailed plans – for you, Salem family. It may surprise you to hear me say this, but I believe God does NOT want you to take His message to EVERYONE. Rather, He has selected particular people that He puts in your path. As He explained to Jeremiah, **You shall go to all to whom I send you** Not everyone, but rather "those to whom I send you." St. Paul was forbidden to go to Asia – instead, the Holy Spirit steered him to Macedonia. God has PLANS for you that involve particular people at certain "opportune moments." Many of those

moments will be unexpected...standing in the grocery line; a family member with a crisis that needs hope, in the classroom before a pop quiz - these moments opens up wonderful opportunities to make a brief witness for Jesus.

Has God put someone in your path? Laid some soul on your heart? Watch! Listen!

The second P is for PROVISION.

Hasn't God begun to provide for you already? In your baptism, He provided a "down payment" of the Holy Spirit. Just now God is filling your ears with the sound of His Word – the Good News that He loves you, calls you, forgives you, and empowers you in Christ. Think back. There have been other things, even strange, painful experiences you've been through. Were they not part of God's provision – readying you to understand and sympathize with people who now face what you once faced?

During my own life, my experiences include:

The death of best friend in first grade;

Attending church as a youth when my friends were doing other activities;

The gang related murder of my first cousin at the age of 17;

Becoming the parent to my parents;

Preaching my first funeral;

My call to be a Mom;

all of which God has used in some way to provide for me and for my witness.

Think back over your life. Include even the heartaches and failures. God was in all of that, shaping you, providing for you. But you still feel inadequate?

Then remember the third P – His PRESENCE.

I am with you always, He said. Look at the cross up here. It is EMPTY! For Jesus is no Dead Savior, but a living Lord. He will not send you out alone, and He promises to whisper into your ear when you run out of words and courage.

Do not be anxious about what you are to say, for it will be given you in that very hour...

Like the steady hand of the physical therapist that walks behind the patient and keeps him from falling, He promises to walk with you. GOD WANTS YOU to speak God's message! Without it people are dying.

Once there was a terrible train wreck. A doctor traveling on board had escaped injury, but he stood helpless amidst the wreckage and watched a fellow passenger

dying. Turning to a bystander, the doctor cried out, “My God, if only I had my instruments!”

God’s INSTRUMENTS. That’s what WE are to be! By the grace and mercy of Christ, that’s what we ALREADY ARE! The need is urgent. The call has gone out.... GOD WANTS YOU!
AMEN AMEN AMEN