

January 2017

I love you.” “I have called you by name and you are mine.”
“I am the Lord your God.”

In every meaningful relationship the time comes when a word must be spoken to define the relationship. Romantic relationships, parent-child relationships, friendships . . . the time comes. That word may carry dynamic feelings, clear intentions, and/or intriguing promises. Sometimes ambiguity prompts this word, as when a couple asks, “Where is this relationship going?” Or maybe the word is spoken at a particular milestone, like when a child leaves home and as a parent you want to express everything that’s in your heart before the moment passes.

Sooner or later . . . the time comes.

When God’s people were conquered by Babylon and were carried away into exile, they suffered untold atrocities and were tempted to believe that God had abandoned them. When life had calmed down some, the people began to believe that it might be better for them to serve the Babylonian gods. The time had come for God to speak a clear word to His people. Thus the prophet Isaiah speaks (43:1-7), as God directs him, a message of abiding fidelity, healing and hope. Once again, the nation of Israel was claimed as God’s chosen servants to make God known to the nations of the world.

Similar words are spoken at the baptism of Jesus and Jesus takes on the “chosen servant” role. Like Israel, He was to make the true God known to the nations of the world. God’s love is for all people: each one created by God and each one called by name.

In every meaningful relationship, the time comes when a word must be spoken to define the reality. Can you hear God speaking these words to you? I encourage you to be intentional. Take time to listen carefully as the new year begins. A relationship exists between you and your Creator. It’s there . . . even if you are not aware of it or intentional in it. This relationship has a well-documented history that goes like this: God created you. Jesus died for you. And God claims you with a loving word of acceptance, forgiveness and commission.

Once you hear this word, you inevitably answer. How you respond and what you answer depends on you, but you **will** answer. “Yes, I will love you in return, God!” Or not. You can be called by God’s name, or choose not to be. You can trust God to draw you back into the relationship

intended from the beginning of creation or you can pretend to be something you’re not. You can be that servant who makes God’s love, forgiveness, peace and justice known wherever you are; Or you can flounder around trying to sort through the myriad of false choices/gods/securities/etc., like an exile in a foreign land.

Can you hear God’s word to you today?

Discerning this word has always led to life, and always will.

~ PASTOR TODD