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Perfume Sermon Series – 3

“Another You”

Helene, a woman from Paris, was on the hunt for a particular perfume. The perfume, like a good wine, had increased in value because of the difficulty in obtaining it. Formulated by the Parisian perfumer Contra-Allee, the perfume had been discontinued and was now very difficult to find. There was even an auction for the dusting powder on the Internet that was sporting a bid of \$139.99!

Helene posted this plea on the Internet: "I've been looking for this fragrance for a very long time... Please let us know where we can buy it wherever in the world." Helene was willing to pay more than 139.99 if she could simply get the fragrance called "Another You." It had become a pearl of great price for her!

It makes me wonder how much we would pay to find "another you." Not the perfume, but the 'other you' **within**. **We** all have '**another you,** **that** can do and be what our current self cannot even begin to imagine. 'Another you' that has the capacity for holiness and heroism.

You may never have thought of such a thing, or you may have had some inclinations that there was more to you than what you or others see on a regular daily basis. Often, however, when we have such inclinations, we are quick to silence them, thinking they are merely our pride showing up from behind our usual humble curtain.

On the other hand, if we are content with who we are and have never had a thought that **there was 'another you,'** inside - or a "second self" as Willa Cather called it - we might feel some anxiety about what such a concept might mean. In that, we are not so very different from the prophet Jeremiah.

In the interchange between Jeremiah and God about Jeremiah's employment as a prophet, there are three points that are applicable to each of us, even if our career has not been Chief Operating Prophet of the company!

The first point is that God knows we have ‘another you’ within. The ‘self’ we are so familiar with is a ‘self’ that has been formed through our history, our experience, our background, our environment. We’re used to that ‘self,’ because it has been our skin for so long. Over the years of life, we have developed certain ways of thinking, certain patterns of behavior and response, even certain friends and food preferences. Still, inside, we have ‘another you’ that is completely known to God but largely unknown to us.

The same words that God spoke to Jeremiah could **have been spoken to us: “Before I shaped you in the womb, I knew all about you. Before you saw the light of day, I had holy plans for you.”** God did know all about us in the womb, and God does have holy plans for us. Most of us, knowing ourselves as we do, might not feel that holy plans are in our future. Plans for the next doctor appointment, or the next duck hunt, maybe. But, holy plans? Hmm... **we’re** not so sure about that!

The second point is that, like Jeremiah, we have a gazillion excuses about why we can't possibly be holy or heroic. We know our daily selves too well. Someone recently said to me, "There's so much I've done in my life that **I'm not proud of. I need to get myself straight**, but I feel like I'm just a hopeless case!" We're often blind to the truth that there is ‘another you’ within, because we regret what we have or have not done in our lives.

So, when we hear that God sees ‘another you’ inside us, we say things like Jeremiah, or Moses, or Sarah, or Martha. "Oh, I'm too young." Or, "I don't know enough." Or, "I can't stand up and talk in front of people." Or, "I'm too old." Or, "You must mean someone else!" Or, "Could you pick someone else?"

At the slightest whisper that **we might have ‘another you’** waiting to do some amazing things, we just want to settle into our little lives and explain that we're fine just as we are.

Yet, as Marianne Williamson, the author of *A Course in Miracles* startlingly says: "Your playing small doesn't serve the world." Or, Mother Teresa of Calcutta who said, "Holiness is not the station for a few. It is the simple duty of us all." In other words, there is more to us than we think. And, that's what scares us.

We can even be hesitant to get too close to God because we’re afraid of what God might want from us. Sometimes we would rather just stay off God's radar screen. But, what might we be missing? Consider the times you have taken a risk, or tried something adventurous, or acted in a way that was unfamiliar to you. Even if **it all didn't come off perfectly, it's likely that you** felt a bit of excitement, enthusiasm, maybe even just a little

adrenalin flowing through your veins. Imagine what you might experience if you **suddenly discovered 'another you'** that was about to take on some holy plans!

Some familiar Biblical characters come to mind:

Moses - a shy, quiet guy with little aptitude for leadership. The holy plan God had for him was to lead the people of God out of slavery in Egypt into a land of plenty and promise.

Esther - one of the many wives of a king. The holy plan God had for her was to halt a court intrigue and save the people of God from execution.

Jonah - a prejudiced, angry, selfish man. The holy plan God had for him was to give God's words to some of the same people he hated.

Mary - a teenage peasant girl in a Middle Eastern culture. The holy plan God had for her was to bear the Son of God – out of wedlock – even though she risked being stoned to death.

These examples do make you wonder about holy plans! You might find yourself agreeing with St. Teresa of Avila who supposedly said to God, "If this is how you treat your friends, it's no wonder you have so few!"

But, holy plans are not only about praying and being an ambassador for God. Holy plans are about becoming whole. When we are whole and healthy we can share wholeness and health. So, here are some other examples from Scripture.

A man – Jesus had healed him and he wanted to leave everything to follow Jesus. Yet, the holy plan for him was to return to his own life and simply tell others how good God had been to him.

Mary of Bethany – the sister of Martha whose holy plans stayed the same – just keep sitting in prayer and contemplation in God's presence.

Naaman – the leper who came to Elisha for healing – the holy plan for him was to wash seven times in the Jordan river to overcome his prejudice that the rivers in his country were more powerful than the rivers in Israel.

Zaccheus – the tax collector – the holy plan for him came during dinner with Jesus when he cleansed his heart of regrets and leaned toward wholeness by becoming truthful.

When we discover "another you" inside that is capable of amazing things, it doesn't always mean giving up everything and traveling to the Himalayas.

The third point is really good news: God will give the "other you" every resource needed to be holy and heroic. God told Jeremiah to stop making excuses because he didn't have to be holy or heroic all on his own. God would be with him every step of the way, giving him the words, the courage, the care, the protection, the wisdom that he needed to fulfill the holy plans he had been given. All Jeremiah had to do was trust that **he had 'another you'** within and that God was fully prepared to help that 'other you' flourish.

There are no clever printed words to describe the perfume "Another You" formulated by Contra Allee because it has been discontinued. But, these words might be appropriate:

Another You - the scent that opens the door to your hidden self.

That perfume might be worth having, because it might make us believe that we had a hidden self that was worth revealing.

Just think what might happen if you opened a door to your hidden self? If you overcame your excuses about what you tell yourself about what you can and cannot do? If you believed God was so present with you that you could be fearless?

Perhaps, life would get a little less ho-hum, even a little more intriguing. You might find yourself wanting to get a little closer to God. You might find your feet beginning to dance. You might find that you were willing to pay more than \$139.99 - more than Helene is willing to pay for "Another You" perfume – **just to find that 'other you.'** Amen.