

Life Week 2026 Devotion - Day 3

Before I Formed You in the Womb by Rev. Todd Jerabek



““Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you a prophet to the nations” (Jeremiah 1:5).

Is God speaking this text to all people, or only Jeremiah? All are not appointed before conception to be God’s prophets. But there is truth in this passage for every person God forms in the womb: “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you.”

Two simple truths are often ignored: God forms each individual in the womb. God knows each person *even before* He forms them in the womb.

What does God know *before* He forms us in the womb? Everything! He knows the number of your hairs, eye color, dangling or attached earlobes, freckles, Down syndrome, spina bifida, that you get 56 stitches at age three, when your hair will begin to grey, and everything about every one of us.

Knowing it all, He forms us in the womb!

If God is so intimately acquainted with us before He forms us in the womb, then no matter who we are—no matter what the world might declare about us—we are precious in His sight. He formed us to be such! We are all so precious to Him that He gave His Son into death to pay for the only perversion in His eyes—something we all share—sinfulness.

One of my greatest pastoral joys was visiting Jonathan, born with Down syndrome. If I felt unappreciated, I’d visit him with Holy Communion. He spoke little, and poorly. He lived in a group home, never had a job. His capacity to love was amazing. When I pulled up, the staff would tell him I was coming. He’d meet me at the door. He knew what I was bringing, and with a hug that met me immediately, he’d declare, “Pastor! With Jesus!”

Disabled? More able than most to distinguish that God was visiting Him in Word and Sacrament. Could he explain what was taking place? He was unable to articulate the confession of sins with me, but the remorse on his face for some indiscretion against the staff (his sin) was palpable, and he might explain his sin in very simple terms. With the sacramental vessels on the table, I’d ask, “What is this?” (pointing to paten) “Jesus!” (pointing to the chalice) “Jesus!”

Was this cognitive recognition? Maybe? Was it a clear confession and statement of faith wrought in Him by the Holy Spirit? Most definitely!

Jonathan was granted entrance into paradise a few years ago. I am the poorer for it! He was God’s gift to me. God knew it before He formed him in his mother’s womb, appointing him even then to be a messenger of the Gospel to bring me healing and strength, a faithful witness to Christ.

What does it mean that something is disabled? That something does not function in the proper manner that it was intended to function. By whose definition, though? Maybe we ought to consider those created in God’s image only as those God chooses to give life. Even before He forms them in the womb, He intimately knows them—and He gives life.

Praise be to God whose foolishness is wiser than men, who loves us completely and selflessly in the Truth incarnate, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Lord of life, grant me Your gracious Spirit that my eyes may be opened to see clearly, especially to see Your gracious gift of life in all those whom You choose to form in the womb. Amen.



Rev. Todd Jerabek grew up in a home with two family members wheelchair bound—his mother with degenerative multiple sclerosis and his brother born with spina bifida. He was a Lutheran school teacher, serving Zion Lutheran School Maywood, California, from 1985-88. Rev. Jerabek was pastor of St. Paul Lutheran Church in Naugatuck, Connecticut, from 1993-2000. He now serves at Zion, St. Peter, and St. John Lutheran Churches in Embarrass, Pella Opening, and Belle Plaine, Wisconsin. He has been married to Pauline since 1985. They have two sons—Nathan and Timothy—and have mourned three miscarriages.