

Week after Trinity Sunday – Year B – June 10, 2009 - Homily

Isaiah 6:1-8; Psalm 29; Romans 8:12-17; John 3:1-17

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You've probably noticed that quite often we sing from our With One Voice worship book (#752) – *I, the Lord of Sea and Sky*. That song also has another name: *Here I Am, Lord*. The chorus goes like this: "Here I am, Lord. Is it I, Lord? I have heard you calling in the night. I will go, Lord, if you lead me. I will hold your people in my heart." Sounds a lot like the reading from the prophet Isaiah, doesn't it? How many of us tonight believe that it's only ordained priests, pastors, and Bishops who have a call from God? The truth is that every one of God's children is called by God to serve Him. Being God's children tells us who we are, our **being** in Christ Jesus our Lord. The hard part for all of us, whether we are ordained or not, is to figure out what God is calling us to **do**. From Scripture we have the general commandment– that is to love God and love our neighbors as ourselves. From our Baptismal covenant, we also learn that God is calling us to work for justice and peace in the world as well. Beyond that, God blesses us each through the power of the Holy Spirit with spiritual gifts.

Let's take a look at some of the spiritual gifts first. According to Paul's letter to the church at Rome (Romans 12:6-9), "We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness." Elsewhere in Romans (Romans 11:29) we learn that God's gifts and calling are irrevocable. This week at Vacation Bible School, we have seen many of these gifts in action: teaching, generosity, compassion, leadership. And there are other gifts like the gift of music – both singing and playing instruments, arts and crafts, helping, hospitality, and administration. We are truly blessed in this place with so many gifted people. Praise God!

Now in today's reading from the book of Isaiah, we hear about God's call to Isaiah, and how he becomes a prophet of the Lord. We still have people today who are called to speak as prophets. Often they are as unpopular as the prophet Amos, in their own time and place, because the prophetic word from God always challenges the status quo. One of the main reasons God blesses our communities with prophets both in ancient and in modern times is to remind people to confess their sins, repent, and return to the Lord our God. When the people listen to the voice of the prophet, hardened hearts are usually softened a towards God and that allows the Holy Spirit to enter and help us to realize where we have gone astray from what God desires for us.

Isaiah is no different. He is worshipping God just as you and I are this evening, and sees a vision of God on his throne. All the angels of heaven are also worshipping God. Isaiah becomes very frightened. In that moment he realizes that he is in the presence of the Holy One of Israel, God Almighty, and the great I AM. In God's presence, he sees and knows more clearly than he has ever done in his whole life. His heart is just breaking, because he is convicted in his own sinfulness. How can we not be convicted in our fallen humanity? God is wholly other. God is wholly holy! Isaiah says it like this, "Woe is me! I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips." He is simply telling it like it is. But Isaiah is also saying it in a way that is his confession, not just a statement of fact. And saying it with such feeling that God knows he is repenting of his sins. Some of you might remember the words of the prayer of humble access that we say at the 8am service. Part of that prayer has these words in it: "But thou art the same Lord, whose property is always to have mercy..." As faithful Christians, there is

nothing we can say or do that is not already forgiven to us, through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ's death and resurrection. Our God is a merciful God. You and I are clothed in righteousness by God's grace and by virtue of our faith in Christ. Just as God did for Isaiah and all the saints, God always grants us forgiveness for our sins when we confess with a repentant heart.

Do you see the pattern here? Isaiah has been worshipping the Lord. His heart is open to God in prayer and love. As you and I may well do during worship together, Isaiah has come very close to God, and his heart is full of sorrow with the painful truth of his sinfulness. He confesses his sins to God and God forgives and cleanses him from all unrighteousness. Then what happens? Having confessed his sins, and felt the healing touch of God's mercy and forgiveness, Isaiah is fully prepared in body, mind and spirit to hear God's voice calling to him. He is also fully prepared in newness of life to respond to God saying, "Here am I; send me!" We know from the rest of the book of Isaiah that he is truly called as a prophet of the Lord and speaks God's truth to the Israelites in times of terrible war and loss. Despite appearances, Isaiah brings a message of hope: God's hope. As followers of God's Son, this is the hope that we now know as the hope of God's salvation, God's healing grace, and eternal life with our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

God has a plan for each and every one of us. Not everyone is called by God to be an ordained leader in the church. But every single one of us is called – perhaps more than once in our lives to serve God in the special and unique way in which God has gifted us. What we learn from Isaiah is that there can be a lot of static and noise that prevents us from hearing how God is speaking to us. What we also learn from Isaiah is that coming together to worship the Lord, and finding the silence of God through prayer and meditation is a really good way to hear God speaking to us. Our stories of God's call to us will all be different, just as we are all different. I also know one more thing. It doesn't matter to God how young or how old we are – while we are still drawing breathe God is not finished with any of us yet, and God will use us if we offer ourselves to Him. Over the next several weeks, I invite us all to listen to God's call on our lives and hear how God wants to use our gifts in His service, so that we might join with Isaiah in saying, "Here am I; send me!"

Amen.