

The Fifth Sunday after Epiphany

Text: Isaiah 6:1-8 (NIV)

¹In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple. ²Above him were seraphs, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. ³And they were calling to one another: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory." ⁴At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke. ⁵"Woe to me!" I cried. "I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty." ⁶Then one of the seraphs flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. ⁷With it he touched my mouth and said, "See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for." ⁸Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" And I said, "Here am I. Send me!"

Theme: *Here Am I, Send Me!*

Isaiah was different from all of the other prophets. The others tried to find excuses why they couldn't serve. Jeremiah said that he was too young. Moses tried to find every excuse that he could think of until he finally said, "Lord, please find someone else!" None of the prophets were eager to do the work that God sent them to do, except for Isaiah. I have often wondered what he thought after God told him that no one would listen to him, and that he would preach until the land would be a desolate waste.

But what was it that gave him such eagerness to serve the Lord? That is what I would like to look at with you today.

I. It was not that He saw the Lord's glory.

Isaiah saw something that very few people have seen. He saw God in all of His glory. God was seated high on a great throne. His glory filled the whole earth. There were angels called Seraphim around him. They covered themselves in God's presence, and they praised God in such a way that the foundations shook. It was an awesome sight for Isaiah. It was so awesome that he cried out in fear, "*Woe is me.*" John saw this same vision in Revelation 4, and he fell down began to weep loudly. In today's Gospel lesson Peter simply witnessed the power of the Lord when Jesus gave them the miraculous catch of fish. He fell down at Jesus' knees and said, "*Go away from me Lord, for I am a sinful man!*"

God's glory never gives us the desire to serve Him. It gives us fear. We might have wished at some time that God would just show His glory to us, but God's glory is a dreadful thing to sinners like us. It is a consuming fire. In fact, that is what the word "Seraph" means. If God's glory were to appear to us now, it would be like a consuming fire. It would burn us like a dried leaf in a fire. God's glory gives us fear. It shows our unworthiness. It shows clearly that He has no need of us, and that we are not worthy to stand in His presence, let alone serve Him. Like Isaiah God's glory makes us cry out, "*Woe is me!*" Like Peter we cry out, "*Go away from me Lord, for I am a sinful man.*"

That is very important to realize because much of today's pop Christianity says that we worship God for His glory. There is even a song I know that says that we don't worship God for what He has done for us. We worship Him for His glory. However, if we were to see the glory of God right now, it would simply strike fear in our hearts. His glory never motivates us to serve Him.

II. Isaiah was ready to serve the Lord because of what the Lord had done for Him.

He stood before God in His glory and confessed, *"I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips."* He thought of all of the unkind words that had gone from his lips. He thought of the lies and the deceit. The mouth is probably one of the dirtiest parts of our body. Think of how it smells if we don't brush regularly, and the decay that our teeth can have. It is a picture of the sin that goes in and out of our mouths. Isaiah stood doomed before God's glory. Then one of the Seraphs took a hot coal from the altar and touched Isaiah's lips. He said, *"See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin is atoned for."* The sacrifices of that altar had paid the price of Isaiah's sin. It was forgiven. God had taken it away. In the book of Revelation when John sees this vision, he is weeping until he sees a Lamb which looks like it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne. All of heaven begins to praise Christ singing, *"Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise."* Heaven praises Christ because He purchased men for God with His blood from every nation, tribe, language people and nation. The Lord also told Peter in today's Gospel lesson, "Don't be afraid." How were any of these men able to stand before the Lord? God took away their sin. Christ cleansed them of their sin and made them fit for His service.

He wants to take away our sin also. He shed His blood on the cross as the payment for our sins. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins. In Holy Baptism He washes our sins away. In baptism we were clothed with Christ. Faith in Him takes away our sins and makes us righteous and holy. Without Christ God's glory would consume us. Clothed in Christ's righteousness we are ready to see the glory of the Lord. Revelation 22 says that when Christ returns, there will be no need for the sun in the new Jerusalem because God's glory will shine on us. Through Christ we will bask in the glory of the Lord. The reason why we praise God is because of the redemption that we have in Jesus Christ and for all of the blessings that He has given to us in Christ. He makes us worthy to stand before the Lord in His glory.

III. When we think of all that the Lord has done for us, we cannot help but want to serve Him.

When God asked, *"Whom shall we send,"* Isaiah shouted, *"Here am I, send me!"* He had just experienced the forgiveness of the Lord. How could he not want to serve this gracious God? Jesus told Peter and the disciples, *"From now on, you will be fishers of men."* They gladly followed Him as their Savior.

When we think of all that our Savior has done for us, we cannot help but follow Him. He calls us all to various vocations. Like Isaiah and Peter there are some whom He calls to be preachers and teachers of His word. There might be some young men among us whom the Lord is calling to be a pastor. Like the other prophets, you might be answering, "Please find someone else," but God is tugging at you and saying, "Follow me, and I will make you a fisher of men." There are also many other church careers for men and women, such as Lutheran teachers, lay ministry, directors of

Christian Education, and several other callings. But God doesn't only call just professional church workers. No matter what our station in life is, He is calling us to follow Him and serve Him as we serve our neighbor. Our service to God is not out of fear, but out of love for His great love and mercy for us. He sends each one of us in various ways to be the ambassadors of His love for this world.

Consider God's great love for you. The day that we come face to face with God's glory, we should burn because of our sins, but in His great love for us God has taken away our sin in Christ. He has made us righteous and holy, so that we can approach God in confidence. May God's Spirit fill us with that faith that we may always thank Him and praise His for His love, and may that faith also make us as eager to serve as Isaiah wanted to live His life for the glory of the Lord who had redeemed him.

Amen.

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