**May 30, 2021 Isaiah 6:1-8**

***Send Me!!!***

**Scripture:** Isaiah 6:1-8 NRSV

*(1)In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lofty; and the hem of his robe filled the temple. (2)Seraphs were in attendance above him; each had six wings: with two they covered their faces, and with two they covered their feet, and with two they flew. (3)And one called to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory." (4)The pivots on the thresholds shook at the voices of those who called, and the house filled with smoke. (5)And I said: "Woe is me! I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; yet my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!" (6)Then one of the seraphs flew to me, holding a live coal that had been taken from the altar with a pair of tongs. (7)The seraph touched my mouth with it and said: "Now that this has touched your lips, your guilt has departed and your sin is blotted out." (8)Then 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!"*

**Notes:**

1. Isaiah sees a ***king*** seated on a throne.
   1. He cries out as a ***doomed*** man.
   2. A seraph dives right to him, holding coal he sears Isaiah’s lips; a ***purification***.
2. We as the Church have our experience of the ***Trinity***.
   1. The ***Trinity*** sets us free from sin.
   2. We are called to ***ministry*** revealing the glory of the Lord.
3. We live in a time where ***insecurity*** is all around us
   1. The renewal of our society is grounded in ***spiritual*** vision.
   2. If ***spiritual*** vision is healthy, then renewal will take place.
4. The ***Trinity*** offers the supreme model for human society.
   1. The Holy Trinity is ***dangerous***.
   2. Our God is a ***consuming*** fire.
   3. Praise of the Trinity is ***obedience*** to truth.
   4. We are ***commissioned*** for helping persons.
   5. Easter and Pentecost tell us the ***victory*** has been won.
5. Does Nicodemus ***understand*** what Jesus is trying to teach?
   1. Nicodemus reveals ***generosity*** and ***respect*** for Jesus.
   2. Nicodemus ***represents*** what happens when we get stuck.
   3. A society short on mercy is an ***offense*** against God and religion is false unless it struggles for ***justice***.
6. We can proclaim the ***Trinity*** and bring its light to bear on every corner of the world.
   1. What happens when you leave this ***Church***?
   2. Trust that while our fears are ***big***, God is even ***bigger***.
   3. The Lord sends ***faithful*** ***followers*** to share the Gospel.
   4. Shed your light in all of the ***darkness*** of this world.

**Script:**

We all have a call to fulfill in our lives, a call from God to do His work in this world. I thought I was fulfilling my call, especially as a teacher I was able to impact so many. As a father for my children, as a husband, one of the greatest blessings in my life has been the time that Jan and I have been together. But this was just the tip of the iceberg for my life and my call. When I began to feel the tug of God on my life in 2003, I had no idea that it would lead me to the pulpit here. I expected a life traveling from church to church, singing and sharing my testimony. I never expected to be the full-time pastor of a church, let alone the church I grew up in; standing at the pulpit donated in the name of my grandmother, Daisy Mae Davis.

We all have a calling in our lives A calling to fulfill in the name of Jesus. For some it will be as a mentor to another learning to walk in Jesus’ ways. Maybe it would be as a parent, or a husband, maybe just as a friend; and then there are those who are called to be teachers, small group leaders, as well as song leaders, pastors, evangelists. Have you sensed the call that God has placed on your life? Have you responded to that call, have you continued seeking clarity on this call? Do you know what the Lord wants you to do?

There’s a song we sing, we even sang it this morning. The Lyrics read: “*Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty.”* The lyrics come from the Revelation of John 4:8, “*And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and inside. Day and night without ceasing they sing, "Holy, holy, holy, the Lord God the Almighty, who was and is and is to come*.” But the thing about this song is that it reminds me of another passage, a passage from Isaiah 6, a passage calling Isaiah to a higher calling, a calling to go in the name of God. Stand with me today as we share in the reading of this passage, Isaiah 6:1-8.

*Isaiah 6:1-8 NRSV (1)In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lofty; and the hem of his robe filled the temple. (2)Seraphs were in attendance above him; each had six wings: with two they covered their faces, and with two they covered their feet, and with two they flew. (3)And one called to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory." (4)The pivots on the thresholds shook at the voices of those who called, and the house filled with smoke. (5)And I said: "Woe is me! I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; yet my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!" (6)Then one of the seraphs flew to me, holding a live coal that had been taken from the altar with a pair of tongs. (7)The seraph touched my mouth with it and said: "Now that this has touched your lips, your guilt has departed and your sin is blotted out." (8)Then 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!"*

While stories in the Bible about peoples receiving a call are usually set in everyday places, Isaiah’s call occurs in the Temple, more specifically the Holy of Holy’s, the greatest shrine in all of Israel, the place where only the most holy of all men may enter and only during specific times. When does it happen? “In the year that King Uzziah died.” The death of King Uzziah brings insecurity to the land and its people; there has been this death, will there be no life?

Isaiah sees another king seated on a throne, the Lord God of Israel who cannot die. He is a vast figure, with the hem of his robe filling the emptiness of the temple. His courts are filled with glorious angels known as seraphs. As they fly about their monarch, even they shield themselves with their wings from His divine glory, calling out to one another in amazement: *"Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory."* Their thundering voices shake the building like an earthquake, and clouds of incense veil Isaiah’s view of what is going on.

Isaiah had to be awestruck and deeply aware of his own sin and the sin of the people. He cries out as a doomed man, fearing that the Lord’s glory will destroy him. A seraph dives right at him, holding a burning coal from the altar of sacrifice with tongs, and with this coal he sears Isaiah’s lips. This is not a punishment, but a purification. The seraph declares Isaiah now free from sin. But it is the Lord’s voice that Isaiah hears next. “*Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?*” Responding from his heart, taking a plunge into a future he cannot begin to imagine, Isaiah answers; “*Here I am. Send me!*”

That is where our passage ends in the lectionary; but let’s take a look at what follows in Isaiah 6:9-13. The Lord tells Isaiah to go and speak to the people, But God informs Isaiah that the people will not readily receive the message. Some will not understand the message, others will resist the instructions. It almost seems as if the Lord holds out the slightest sign of hope, by speaking briefly of a ravaged stump that produces a green shoot.

We hear about Isaiah and his call here on Trinity Sunday when we celebrate the mystery of the one and only God as three co-equal persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Our story as the Church in this time and place and Isaiah’s story may be too close for comfort, even if close enough to make us holy.

Isaiah has his temple experience, and we as the Church have our experience of the Trinity. The mystery leaves us awestruck; we try our best, but it is difficult for us to wrap our minds around it. The Trinity sets us free from sin, sets us free for life now and forever. As Isaiah is summoned into service as a prophet, so we as Church are called into ministry that does not make us popular, but does reveal the glory of the Lord throughout all the earth. Isaiah sees that glory in the year that King Uzziah died, a time when land and people are beset by insecurity.

We also live in a time much like the year that King Uzziah died, insecurity is all around us, people are confused, scared, and acting a bit irrational. Our economic system is teetering on disaster. Environmental concerns seeing stronger storms and more wild fires than in the past. Civil unrest, groups resort to violence and inciteful rhetoric. And let us not forget the covid 19 virus; The restrictions, the effects and the aftermath. Yes, we live in a time much like the year that King Uzziah died, living with insecurity. One could say we are damaging ourselves in a way no external enemy ever could. At times it feels as our whole economic, political, and civil systems are about to implode. The renewal of our society and community is grounded in spiritual vision. If spiritual vision is false or fanatical, the social results will be disastrous. But if spiritual vision is healthy, then renewal will take place.

At the heart of Christian spiritual vision and renewal is the Holy Trinity. I am talking about the reality of God, not the doctrines associated with it, the experiences we have with God. While there is an essential place for doctrine, what grabs at our hearts is the reality, the things we have seen and heard, not to mention what we have felt in our inner being; it is about the praiseworthiness of God and our realization of the presence of God, whether it be God the Father, Jesus the son, or the Holy Spirit.

What heats up doctrine, what makes it hot, is doxology, liturgy, I am talking about worship; songs of praise draw us into the presence of God, and at times we can have such a worship service that we are worked into a spiritual frenzy, I asked about such services last week. In our passage today we find Isaiah as well as all of the angels present, proclaiming a God worthy of our praise, a God who overflows with mercy and justice.

As we hear of the Seraph’s declarations this day, one must wonder, what happens, when we leave this place? What happens to the Trinity once we leave our sanctuary for the street? How do we link our faith in the Triune God with our insecure and suffering society? The Trinity, the one and only God, offers the supreme, life-enhancing model for human society and the communities of earth. Again, the Trinity, the one and only God, offers the supreme, life-enhancing model for human society and the communities of earth. The one God is three persons of equal dignity. The three are distinct. None is isolated from the others. None is absorbed by the others. What distinguishes each is their relationship with the others. The three divine persons participate in a graceful dance encircling the others, a joyous dance without end. Where one seems to end the other picks up and continues the works of their hands. Through our creation, redemption, and sanctification, we are invited into the circle to join this dance, and thus enjoy the awesome hospitality and graciousness of God.

The Holy Trinity is dangerous, transforming lives and societies, changing the way we look at our own being, our own culture and society. Our God is a consuming fire; He reaches inside and He melts down our cold hearts of stone. The doctrine of the Trinity, a verbal snapshot of the Holy One, is also dangerous because of its implications: economic, environmental, and political implications that threaten and overthrow the forces of this world and forces of death, implications that honor the God of life. Praise of the Trinity is obedience to truth; it destabilizes every idolatry and every injustice.

As the Church we are a prophetic people. We are commissioned for the precarious task of helping persons, families, communities, institutions, and nations come to understand more completely Trinitarian life, a life that blesses all people and all creation. Easter and Pentecost tell us that the victory has been won already. The Trinity will not be defeated. However, it is possible even for Christians to live in a way that is clueless and fail to let the Triune light shine through our lives.

Today’s Gospel, taken from John, recalls a conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus. Jesus is just beginning His ministry, he is seen as an upstart young rabbi just in from the countryside, Nicodemus a key religious leader, a teacher of teachers, in Jerusalem. Nicodemus sneaks out one night to talk with Jesus, and Jesus blows his heart open by a demand that this old man be born again. Does Nicodemus get it, does he understand what Jesus is trying to teach him or does he not?

This story in John, chapter three, leaves these questions unanswered, but I have a tendency to think that Nicodemus got it. As with Isaiah’s call, we must go past the assigned lectionary text, and in this case to places where Nicodemus appear again. In chapter seven, he reminds other religious leaders that like anyone, Jesus deserves a fair hearing. But those listening to Nicodemus reject his assertion (John 7:45-52). Nicodemus appears again once Jesus is dead as he joins Joseph of Arimathea in preparing the body and placing it in the tomb. By bringing a large quantity of spices for the burial preparations, Nicodemus demonstrates generosity and his respect for Jesus. (John 19:38-42) So then, Nicodemus makes an appeal to fairness, and at considerable expense, he buries the dead, a work of mercy.

Yet Nicodemus represents what happens when we get stuck. Nicodemus is a decent man, yet decency is not enough. His world, like ours, must hear time and again that a society short on mercy is an offense against God and religion is false unless it struggles for justice.

The story of Nicodemus in the Gospel of John ends before the resurrection. Our story as the Church however, depends upon the resurrection. We have no reason or excuse to stay stuck. We can proclaim the Trinity and bring its light to bear on every corner of the world. We can advocate a politics and an economics and an environmentalism that reflects the unity of the Trinity in love.

I asked before and I ask again; “What happens when you leave this place? What happens to the Trinity once you leave this sanctuary for the street you live on? What happens in your faith when you walk out these doors? Do you practice what we preach here? Do you share the love of God, to those you encounter? Do those who encounter you come to know who Christ is because they have met you? Will those who know you outside these four walls say that you exemplify the Christian Walk, identify you as a good Christian. Would they look to you as an example of Christian faith? And would that example be a good one, or one that those outside the church look down upon? What does your life example say to those who do not know Jesus? What does your actions inspire in other people?

Let’s take it a bit further; what does your life and witness within the church say to others? Are you committed to the message of this church? Are you committed to the ministry of this church? Are you actively involved in these activities? Are you taking part in the Fellowship activities of the church? Are you taking part in the discipleship activities of the church? Are you being discipled by another believer? Are you discipling somebody else? Are you helping with a Sunday school class or small group? Finally, are you doing your part to spread the good news of Jesus?

We are all called to this ministry, maybe in different ways, but we all have a part to fill in God’s church, so step up and get involved. We can go public with our prophecy, we can trust that while our fears are big, God is even bigger. And as we hear the Lord asking “*Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?*” we can have the courage and boldness to respond, “*Here am I, Send me.*” We may not live in the year that King Uzziah died, but the Lord is still sending His faithful followers out into the community to share the Gospel message to those who do not know. Shine your light in all of the darkness of this world. Perhaps a seraph plummets right at us to cleanse our lips with love’s fire and make us people bold enough to tell the truth.