

Here Am I

Luke 5:1-11

Grace and Peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. May the words of my mouth and the ears of our hearts be open to the word of God this day. AMEN.

Sometimes we get the really good Bible passages that just draw your imagination in and you could almost picture the scene in our minds. Well today we get images that should be clear as you see what Isaiah saw and what Peter saw. Imagine how they felt and why they were scared.

In the first Lesson, Isaiah, a prophet of God gives us the year, when Uzziah died, "I saw the Lord". Then he goes on to describe what he saw. He sees things that are beyond normal experience, things you wouldn't expect to see here or at home, or at work. But Isaiah sees a vision of the Heavenly kingdom, He witnesses first hand God sitting on his throne in heaven. Then he sees first hand the angels. Again not those that Hallmark, stores today would have you believe, but angels of heaven which are scary. They are seraphs, from the word for burn, because they light, fire, shining, radiating. They covered their faces because as powerful as they are they have no right to see God in all his majesty. The Bible tells us in several places that those who look upon the full radiance of God will surely die, and so these seraphs fly with two covering their eyes. And while they flew in attendance of God the Almighty they called to one another, "Holy, holy, holy Is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory." And their voices of praise boomed with power, so much so that the foundations of the temple itself shook. Remember this is just the seraphs talking that shakes the foundations, imagine what happens when God speaks a little later. No if you saw and heard all this today in this place how would you feel. No wonder this image is scary to Isaiah. He has seen the Lord and the power of his angels, his majesty and his glory.

Seeing all this what is Isaiah reaction? "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!" In other words Isaiah says I am not worthy, I am a sinner, of a race of sinners, I am not worthy to see God and come into his presence. He is scared because he knows the awesome power of God, and what is he to witness to that.

In our gospel reading, Luke tells us about another man's run in with the God almighty. Peter was just as amazed as Isaiah when Jesus spoke and he realized he was in the presence of the almighty. He and his partners had been working all night and caught nothing,

and that is not easy work. He was tired, sore, and just plain worn out. After a night of throwing out the nets and then hauling up by hand this wet nets and doing it again, hour after hour after hour and getting nothing, you could imagine quite clearly Peter's thoughts when Jesus instructs him to go out to the deeper water and let down the nets yet one more time. Right, it's a waste of time. Imagine just the eye roll as Peter looks over at James and John and says want to do it one more time. From his many years of experience as a fisherman, Peter knew when it was a bad time for fishing and this was one of them. But out of respect for Jesus, even if he doesn't think it's a great idea and says as much, he decides to go ahead and do it. He probably threw the net out one more time, just knowing that they will catch nothing but goes through the motion anyway, and how wrong he was. In that moment, Peter, as they are hauling up this net straining with all their muscles to pull it on board, without tipping the small vessel, In that moment Peter knows with certainty that the Lord has come into his presence. And he does pretty much what Isaiah did, "He fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Go away from me, for I am a sinful man!"

It seems like a pattern here that when you stand before God and know that you are in his presence that suddenly you also see yourself as sinful and weak, a fallen creature. The readings today are in agreement. They are not so much Joy in the presence of God; rather they speak of fear.

Both Isaiah and Peter were terrified and were brought to their knees and confessed their unworthiness. They were in the presence of the glory, the power, the majesty, the perfection and purity of a God who is so totally opposite to what they were. They knew that God looked at them as the mighty one of all times, and he saw them for who they were, Their hearts and minds were an open book, everything they had every said, thought, or wished suddenly was flashing before their eyes and they just knew that God sees and knows it all.

Today, People tend to think they are okey-dokey with God, even some Christians believe their trust, their commitment, their love, their sincerity, their prayers, their obedience, even their faith are okay and so they are close to God. You know what I mean if we do so much of this and do that and say this then God's on our side and we are acceptable to God. But the truth is; even with our best clothes on, our best behaviors, our best thoughts and prayers, we are still filthy rag covered, offensive delinquents. In the light of the glory and love of God what we consider our best still falls way short of God's awesome glory, and we are not worthy to stand before his thrown. In God's presence our reaction is the same as that of Isaiah – "I am lost, I am doomed".

When we come here to worship we should realize that we don't come here in comfort seeking simply a good time, and fellowship with each other, but that also we are coming into the presence of the almighty God. The awesomeness of that power should be so great that you we should be turned upside down, knocked down to the floor, opened up for all to see our sins and wrongs. As we take our seats here in church, our pretensions that everything is okay should fall away because we now are before the One who is so good, so holy, so just, so godly that we say with Peter, "Go away from me, Lord! For I am a sinful man!" That is how we should be coming into worship.

But let's be honest, how many of us think of this when we walk into this church on Sunday morning. We come here thinking about who else will be here, to catch up on news, to see others, and to possibly learn and worship something new today. But usually the coming into worship full of sin, regrets, seeking freedom from our guilt is not on our minds. And I don't mean the listing of some individual sins that we say at confession time, I mean the being of sin, our human self. Sin is not just what we do but it is what we are, sinful. By nature we are selfish, rebellious, we are hateful, lust-filled, jealous, whether we put these into practice or not. Sin is a radical break with God. Sin is a hole so deep that we can't get across it. Sin is total separation from God, and there is nothing we can do about it.

I wonder if we have become just a little bit too blasé about the confession of sin in our worship and in the Lord's Prayer when we say, "Forgive us our sins". Do we say the words without knowing how much we need the forgiveness. What if when we came to worship one day, and God the almighty in his splendor is here before us, The angels flying around shaking the foundations of the building with their praise, and God sees right into your soul and knows instantly everything you have ever done. Would we then feel how much unworthy we are. Do you feel the words when you say "We have sinned against you in thought, word and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone." One day we will stand before the throne of God and we will say these words and we will know how serious a situation it really is

But will that be enough? Will that be enough to overcome our sinfulness, our helplessness to do anything about it. Will it be enough to overcome our lack of freedom to accept Jesus and instead to constantly choose to do what we want, and assume our earthly role in the here and now. Is it enough to overcome our unworthiness?

Now I have talked for sometime how sinful we are. But that is so that we can see deep down our true colors, not what those other people are like, Not what that person needs to hear, but what you are, deep down a sinner. And if we can fully understand our unworthiness

and helplessness in overcoming sin on our own then we can begin to understand the beauty and wonder of the freedom and joy that the cross of Jesus gives us. We are and remain sinners and yet we are accepted by God because of what Jesus did for us on Good Friday. God comes to those who are totally helpless to do anything about their situation and welcomes us home. It is not that we have taken the first step toward God but that he has come to us and tells us that we are accepted. I don't claim Jesus, he claims me. Without him I could do nothing.

Take Isaiah as an example. The prophet is in God's heavenly throne room overcome with a sense of his own unworthiness. You might say he is frozen to the spot, fearful that his sin will bring about his destruction. Then at God's command an angel takes a burning coal from the altar and touches his lips, saying, Now that this has touched your lips, your guilt as departed and your sin is blotted out."

God does the impossible; he accepts the ungodly. He says to us as he said to Isaiah, Your guilt is gone, and your sins are forgiven. The blood of Jesus has set you free. Jesus has closed the gap in our relationship with God and has declared, Your sin is taken away.

The message of the Gospel is this and anything less than this is no longer the gospel. Jesus, the Son of God, took on to the cross all of our guilt and sin and paid for all of it with his life. It is *only through him and him alone* that we receive forgiveness and are saved eternally. Even though we let God down constantly, we can be confident of where we stand with God. We know that through Jesus we are accepted.

God gives us the faith to grasp and rely on his grace. Faith is the realization of how empty we are and how much we need God's help. We believe in him and trust him because he first accepted us. And even when our feelings tell us that God could not possibly forgive us, or when our faith gives way to doubt, that doesn't change our status with God one bit. God loves me, Jesus died for me, God has accepted me and that's all that counts. That's the beauty of the gospel in all its simplicity. It's grace, it's free, it's a gift.

But that's not the end of it. After Peter had made his confession of sin, Jesus told Peter and his friends first off to not be afraid, because God and Jesus is on their side they need not be afraid. Then he gives them their first commission, "From now on you will be catching people." After Isaiah had been cleansed of his guilt, he hears the voice of the Lord ask, "Whom shall I send? Who will go for us?" And Isaiah replies, "Here am I. Send me!"

God then gives him the task of being messengers to his people. Isaiah doesn't say, "Send me if it isn't too hard. Send me if I don't lose face with my friends or it doesn't cost me

anything. Send me if I have nothing better to do and nothing else is more pressing right now. Send me if you will guarantee me success." Isaiah had experienced the judgment of God on sin and realized to an even greater degree that God has a never-ending love for him. He responded with gratitude and thanks, "Here am !! Send me!!"

Having been cleansed and restored to God and assured of life with him now and forever, let's us also like Peter and Isaiah take up the challenge to catch people - telling them what Jesus means to us, serving them in their needs, comforting them with Christian love, encouraging and supporting those who are sad and depressed. Let's not excuse ourselves with the plea, "Master, we have worked all night long and caught nothing. We tried so hard but we haven't had any luck." May the Holy Spirit create in us a new heart. With sins forgiven and God's grace, let our response to the love of God also be, "Here am !! Send me!!"

May the Grace and Peace of God be with you this day and throughout the week to come.
Amen.

Let us pray for the whole people of God in Christ Jesus and for all people according to their needs:

Gracious Lord, you have sent your Son into this world to free us from sin and redeem us by his blood. We give you thanks for this gift of freedom over death, over sin, over evil, and we come before you as your children. In that freedom Lord, we come into your place of worship to praise you in your glory and to hear your will for us. Use us and call us to be your servants in this world, freed from sin, commissioned with your Word, and empowered to be your witnesses.

LORD IN YOUR MERCY: hear our prayer

O Lord, you called out to Isaiah and to Peter and James and John to go to your people and share your word. You have also called us to be your people in this time or place in a world of unclean lips and a world of sinful people. Use us and all Christians around the world to share of your love and grace. To accept people of all kinds and to teach and love and care for them in this time. Use the church this day to draw all people into you one communion.

LORD IN YOUR MERCY: hear our prayer.

Heavenly Father, We hear your Call and now of your love, but evil and temptations are still abounding. The world is full of war, violence, death, destructions and disasters. There is theft, abuse, rapes, and murders in the news each day. Lord bring these things to an end. Bring your peace to the world and free us from our destructive ways. Spread your love upon all people so that we may work together instead of against each other. Spread your Spirit to the world so that we can be lifted up and see your kingdom now in this place.

LORD IN YOUR MERCY: hear our prayer.

Lord we keep in our hearts and minds all those that are in need. We especially ask your care and presence of the Holy Spirit to be with the sick, the shut-ins, the hurt and the scared, the worried, and the lonely. Comfort and give healing and your peace to all those in need and especially all those we lift up to you now.....

LORD IN YOUR MERCY: hear our prayer

Into your hands o Lord we commend all for whom we pray trusting in your mercy, through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.