

**Willow River Parish: Clear Lake, Deer Park, and Faith Family**

**Title: “Here I Am, Send me!”**

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

*6 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. <sup>2</sup> 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. <sup>3</sup> And one called to another and said:*

*“Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory.”*

*<sup>4</sup> The pivots on the thresholds shook at the voices of those who called, and the house filled with smoke. <sup>5</sup> 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!”*

*<sup>6</sup> Then one of the seraphs flew to me, holding a live coal that had been taken from the altar with a pair of tongs. <sup>7</sup> 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.” <sup>8</sup> 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!”*

Today's lessons are about calling. There are many prophets in the Bible. Shall we name the prophets you know? Nehemiah, Isaiah, Micah, Jeremiah, Samuel, Moses, etc... Every prophet commonly experiences God's calling before proclaiming the word of God. For example, in the life of Moses, he was born a Hebrew. When he was born, Pharaoh was concerned about the ever-increasing populations of Hebrews, so he ordered to have all newborn Hebrew boys killed. Then Moses' mother put him in a basket and sent him to the Nile to hide him. Miraculously, he was found by the daughter of the pharaoh, and he grew up with the Egyptian royal family. However, he always had a Hebrew identity. So, when an Egyptian slave-master was beating a Hebrew, Moses killed him and fled to Mount Horeb. There he hears God's

calling to bring God's people out of Egypt.

Let's look at another example. During Nehemiah's time, Israel was under Babylon, and the Israelites became slaves to Babylon, the wall of Jerusalem was broken down, and its gates were destroyed with fire. (Ne 1:3) When Nehemiah lost his kingdom and wept and cried, God gave him a call to restore Israel, and in the end, he rebuilt the wall with patience and diligence despite numerous obstacles and threats from surrounding peoples. There are so many examples in the Bible, but let's look at David's one last. He was Jesse's youngest son, and he loved God, but he was not noticed by anyone because he was the youngest. While he was still a boy, he went to bring food to his brothers fighting the Philistines. When David heard the giant Goliath blaspheme God, this caused him to feel divine rage and he wanted to fight Goliath. In conclusion, the Bible describes that there is no king who obeyed the word of God like David. In this way, the prophets were people who loved God, and they were people who loved God's people. Beloved, God gives His calling to those who love God and love His people.

The prophet Isaiah also hears God's calling. The book of Isaiah chapter 6, which we read today, describes how he was called by God. In 6:1, it says that King Uzziah died. In Chronicles, the kings who followed God's word are described as good kings, and the kings who worshiped idols without obeying God's word are described as bad kings. King Uzziah was a good king who kept the word of God. His evaluation is given in 2 Chronicles 26:4-5: “<sup>4</sup>King Uzziah did what was right in the sight of the Lord, just as his father Amaziah had done. <sup>5</sup>He set himself to seek God in the days of Zechariah, who instructed him in the fear of God; and as long as he sought the Lord, God made him prosper.” King Uzziah became king at the age of 16 and led Israel in a good direction for 52 years. But he died of an illness. When the king, who had led Israel well, died, Isaiah must have been worried about Israel's future. Also, at that time, the powerful Assyria was trying to dominate Israel, so Isaiah was worried about Israel, and had no choice but to pray.

While he is praying to God because of his worries and concerns about God's people, he receives a call from God. As he prayed, he saw God seated on a throne high and lofty. Verses 1-3 describes in detail: “<sup>1b</sup>I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lofty; and the hem of his robe filled the temple. <sup>2</sup>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.<sup>3</sup> And one called to another and said: “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory.”

Paradoxically, the death of Uzziah opened the spiritual eyes and ears of Isaiah. Uzziah died, but God’s work kept continuing through Isaiah. God’s work is truly amazing. Let’s consider Moses and Joshua. Moses was a great leader. After his death, people were worried. People thought that there would be no leader like Moses, and life in the wilderness would be miserable without him. However, God chose Joshua. When Moses was alive, no one thought that Joshua would become Moses’ successor and a leader. However, after Moses died, God made Joshua great and made him a leader to lead Israel. In the end, Moses couldn’t lead God’s people to the land of Canaan, but Joshua did.

Thus, when Uzziah died, and while Isaiah was praying, God appeared before him. God is perfect and good. Before Him, all human beings are humble and small. In addition, we see our sin before God. Realizing our own sin and realizing that we were sinners are also something we know when God let us know. What would you think if we told people who do not believe in God that humans are sinners? Perhaps they will feel uncomfortable and deny that fact. On the contrary, they might say, “I am an honest man who obeys the law and I am not a sinner.” In this way, realizing that we are sinners and repenting before God is possible through God’s work and help.

In today’s Gospel, Jesus went to a lake. There the fishermen were getting off their boats and washing their nets. Fishermen make a living by catching fish and selling them on the market. So, they worked all night long, but didn’t catch anything. Their hearts were empty, and they were full of worries and concerns about their livelihood. Eventually they gave up catching fish and were washing their nets. But Jesus told them to go out into the deep water and let down their nets for a catch. Perhaps they thought, ‘Sir, we have already worked all night long.’ However, they decided to work once again following Jesus’ words for the livelihood of their families. Then, what happened to them? Yes, they got a lot of fish. The important thing here to think is that the Bible isn’t saying that if we believe in Jesus we can catch a lot of fish, nor if we believe in Jesus we will be materially successful. However, today’s Gospel is talking about what salvation is and what repentance is. Until Jesus approached them, they didn’t catch anything. Their lives were unstable and uncertain. Their lives had always been dominated by

worries and anxieties. However, when Jesus came into their lives, their worries and concerns were turned into relief and hope, comfort and happiness. They realized that the all-seeing Jesus was God, and through God they repented for the days they lived without knowing God and for the days they lived according to their plans. True repentance is possible only when God touches our hearts and enlightens us.

Returning to the story of Isaiah, Isaiah realized how lowly and ungrateful he was before God. He also realized he committed sins before God. So he was afraid, and he thought he was going to die soon. However, Verse 6-7 says: “Then one of the seraphs flew to me, holding a live coal that had been taken from the altar with a pair of tongs. 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.”” Contrary to Isaiah's thoughts, God forgave Isaiah's ignorance and all his sins. And God says to Isaiah: “Whom shall I send and Who will go for us?” Although Uzziah died, God chose Isaiah, and through him God decided to keep continuing His work for His people. And, Isaiah answers without hesitation: “Here I am; send me.”

Beloved, our lives, communities, societies, countries, and the world are not perfect. After dinner at home, when you turn on the TV and watch the news, we can know how noisy our society is and how we live our lives according to our plans: Endless pandemic, endless accidents, gun crimes, racism, drug, and alcohol issues. This is the world we live in.

You may know Oprah Winfrey. What she said about a mission resonated with me, so I want to share it with you today. 1. If you have more than others, it's not a blessing, but a mission. 2. If you have pain more than others, it's not a pain, but a mission. 3. If you have something exciting more than others, it's not a delusion but a mission. 4. If you have something burdensome more than others do, it's not a burden, but a mission.

Beloved, God is still calling us for His mission today. He calls us saying: “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” What would you answer to God's calling? I hope you too answer “Here I am, send me” without hesitation like Isaiah. Amen.