

Green Hill Presbyterian Church  
“Send Me”  
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Trinity Sunday—May 27, 2018

Lessons: Isaiah 6:1-8; John 3:1-17

“In the year the King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord.” So says the prophet Isaiah. We know very little about Isaiah. He isn’t mentioned elsewhere in the Bible, although he is quoted. Before the experience of seeing God, we know almost nothing about him, except the name of his father. We might assume that he was simply minding his own business. There is nothing bad to say about him, but there is nothing particularly good either. We just don’t know anything about him. Yet one day, during the year when Israel was in a crisis because their king had died, and thus their future was now uncertain, God came calling upon Isaiah and Isaiah’s response was exactly what we might expect. When Isaiah saw the Lord, he was terrified and he started back-pedaling as fast as he could go. “I am in trouble now. I know what I’m like; I know all my weaknesses that I work so hard to cover up; I know the state of my community, my society, my government and it isn’t pretty. And here I am standing in the very presence of God. I’m in for it now.” When God calls Isaiah, basically Isaiah tries to say: “You’ve come to the wrong guy.” But of course that doesn’t stop God. God doesn’t pay any real attention to Isaiah’s fearful response. God simply sends an angel to make Isaiah clean, to help him to recognize that with the power of God, anyone can be called. So that when God finally calls asking “Whom shall I send and who will go for us?” Isaiah is quick to respond: “Here I am. Send me!”

I want to suggest that this story today is written for every one of us who has ever doubted God’s ability to use the likes of us. I know a great many people who will tell you that they are not Christian enough, their faith is not strong enough, or good enough, or orthodox enough to serve in special ways. I know others who will say that they are not good enough people, that if others knew what they were really like, then likely those others would be disappointed, and they would never think to ask them for a special task in the church. And there are others still who believe that most everyone else is more qualified to serve than they are. They don’t have what it takes to lead in the church. Isaiah is written for people like that. Isaiah felt unclean and unprepared for the task at hand, and God gave him everything he needed.

That is our word for today. God gives us all the gifts we need. We have all that we need to be the church of Jesus Christ in this time and place right now. We are called to celebrate God’s abundance in this place. God gives us what we need and haven’t we discovered that time and again? Some of you have told me that when the church recognized the need for an elevator the cost was quite high and some people wondered how we could pay for it, and all the money needed to install that elevator was found right here and today those who cannot climb up stairs easily can still come to church, as I discovered last year after my own surgery. God gives us everything we need. I gather the same thing happened with air conditioning. Some wondered how we could pay for it, and it was paid for. God gives us all the gifts we need. God has a long history of taking plain, regular, fragile, confused human beings and transforming them by the power of God’s Spirit into something so much more.

How all this happens, we don’t exactly know. We’re a little like Nicodemus that way. We get all confused about how God can use us, about how we can start over or be born again, instead of simply celebrating that God’s love for the world, including the people right here in this part of the world, is so great, that God won’t give up on us, that God will continually send God’s presence in the form of the Spirit, so that people might have life in abundance.

That is not always easy to accept. One minister friend who was making a move to a new community wrote me saying she felt like a panicked schoolgirl and had to keep reminding herself to

believe all the sermons she had preached across the years about trusting God. It isn't easy and it is made worse because we so easily get stuck in and amongst the small stuff, instead of focusing on the bigger picture of God's presence at work in the world. We tend so easily to get caught up in the desires of the flesh, to use Paul's phrase, which is not simply about body parts, but rather has to do with how we get so wrapped up in our own concerns instead of discovering the joy of life in the Spirit. We fall back into fear, instead of claiming our spirit of adoption where we in fact are the very children of God. God did not give us a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but God gave us a spirit of adoption where we get to see the world from God's perspective.

There is a wonderful email that has been going around for a number of years—you might have seen it—that illustrates the difference between living in the flesh and living in the Spirit. It was a story about a class that was asked to list the Seven Wonders of the World. There was some disagreement, but the following got the most votes: the pyramids of Egypt, the Taj Mahal, the Grand Canyon, the Empire State Building, the Panama Canal, St. Peter's Basilica, the Great Wall of China. While gathering the votes, the teacher noticed that one quiet student had not yet turned in her paper, so the teacher asked if she was having problems. The girl replied, "Yes, a little. I couldn't quite make up my mind because there were so many." The teacher said, "Well, tell us what you have, and maybe we can help." The girl hesitated, then read, "I think the Seven Wonders of the World are: to see, to taste, to touch, to hear, to feel, to laugh, and to love."

God has already put God's Spirit in us. Our task is to trust, to love, to laugh, to celebrate our status as God's children, to get out of our houses of fear, and to start living instead in the house of God where our needs will be met, where we'll be given the gifts we need to face the challenges that come our way, where we will know that we are eternally loved, where we'll be able to answer God's summons as Isaiah did, leaving our fears behind, and raising our hands to say: here I am. Send me.

Let us pray: Sometimes I feel discouraged, and think my work's in vain, but then the Holy Spirit revives my soul again: Let your Spirit be at work in us O God, giving us all the gifts we need to serve you in this time and this place. In the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.