

February 7, 2010 - Fifth Sunday after Epiphany
The Rev. Canon Bob Riegel

Isaiah 6:1-8 Luke 5:1-11

God called Isaiah. The Son of God called Peter. The Spirit of God calls you.

God is calling you. It is the very nature of God to call us into a loving relationship with the Holy. It is the nature of God to call people to serve God in some way. I deeply believe that every one, every one of you, is called by God to something.

As a song by Robert Telson says.

Oooh, yeah
Desert road from Vegas to nowhere
Somewhere better than where you've been
But we both know that a change is coming
Coming closer around the bend
And I am calling you, don't you hear me.
I am calling you
I'm calling, I'm calling, I'm calling you
I know you hear me
I am calling you

Hearing the call and responding to it requires moving through a number of steps. Confrontation – Conviction – Confession – Cleansing—Call and Commission

We start with confrontation; a meeting with God. For Isaiah it was a remarkable vision of God in the temple and hearing an angel choir singing Sanctus – Holy Holy Holy, Lord God of hosts. For Peter it was a simple but remarkable catch of fish. And for you? You do remember times when you had some glimpse of God's presence: perhaps in a church, alone or with choir and congregation singing. Perhaps at the seaside or a mountain view or the birth of a baby or the smile of a child or a special dream or a wonderful new idea: something evoked awe. Many of us rather than treasuring and nurturing these glimpses deny them and spend a lot of time explaining them away, and we seldom share them with others.

Why would we turn away from a confrontation with God? I think it is because many of us cannot stand the conviction, conviction, that comes with such a meeting. I recall in college sitting alone in the great college chapel. Late sun shone through lovely stained glass windows. I felt God was there. Earlier in the day The Reverend Sam Shoemaker had preached. He said that God was constantly around us like radio waves. Always there, but we had to intentionally tune in. He said that more often people wanted to turn God off. Why, why would I not want to hear God? Wouldn't that be a blessing? No way because I would immediately have to be honest that there were things I was doing, things that were wrong and displeasing to God. Even more if I accepted that the voice and vision were true, then I might have to do some new

things. Isaiah and Peter both accepted the reality of God being there and speaking. Peter is convicted and says Lord, get away from me. Isaiah is convicted and says Woe is me I am lost, done in. Can you and I dare say, “All is not right between me and God and between me and God’s creation.”

Accepting conviction should lead to confession. Isaiah says, “I am a man of unclean lips and I live in a people of unclean lips.” And Peter says, “I am a sinful man.” Now I do not know about Isaiah and Peter, but I do know that I and others use confession as an excuse doing nothing. If I am not a good person how could I possibly bring God’s help and love to others? If I am not worthy you wouldn’t want me to teach a class or work with youth or spend money in a different way. We get stuck in saying how bad we are and don’t move on past confession.

Confession leads to cleansing and cleansing is often painful. It is so hard to give up our sin – so hard for me to get rid of the things that damage and spoil my relationship to God. Cleansing for Isaiah meant the vision of the angel touching his unworthy lips with a hot coal. Cleansing for Peter meant as Jesus said, “Stop being afraid, stop drawing back.” The Bible says that we are the new temple of God. And I believe we must invite Jesus to enter this temple and cleanse it – to throw out all that is ungodly, all that separates us from God’s love and service. But perhaps the most difficult cleansing for me, is to allow someone to die for my sin: to admit that my sin is bad enough to require that – a personal cleansing of me through the cross.

Jesus said to Peter, “Stop being afraid, stop drawing back, from now on you will be catching people. The call was repeated in many ways. “Go into all the world,” “Feed my sheep” And Peter left everything and followed Jesus. Isaiah after confrontation and conviction, confession and cleansing heard God say, “Whom shall I send and who will go for us?” and Isaiah said, words that we all can learn to say, “Here am I. Send me.” Sometimes God’s call is for total life change. More often God’s call is for smaller everyday things. Be more attentive to you spouse and children, get serious help for your drinking, come worship more often, be a better steward with your money, help serve the homeless, find times of recreation and joy, be attentive to the needs of others, and to your own needs..

When we accept these calls we discover we have missions. We live with a purpose, with a plan, with a mission. We live knowing that in what we do we are commissioned to be part of God’s saving, redeeming action in the world.

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Calling, calling, calling you
I know you hear him
God is calling you
SO BE IT. AMEN