

**Isaiah 6:1-8 (NRSV)**

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!”

***“Sacred Creative Vocation”***

Well, God sure knew how to get the prophet Isaiah’s attention. Yes, Isaiah was already a prophet prior to the “call story” that was shared today from the 6th Chapter of the book named for this influential prophet. In chapters 1-5 we can read about Isaiah preaching the word that God had given him in order to instruct the people. But something needed to change. Prophetic preaching for Isaiah had become too ordinary, too predictable. And so, BAM, God surprises Isaiah with an image of the holy in the form of a six-winged seraph!! THAT got his attention.

Now, Isaiah is not the first of God’s messengers to benefit from the divine WOW-factor! ‘Nor would he be the last. Moses was called out of the burning bush. Amos was called away from his flock of sheep, as were the shepherds after Jesus’ birth. And Mary had been startled by an angel in the midst of her daily routine announcing that she had been chosen to be the mother of our Savior -- just to name a couple of examples.

When God surprises us in such an extraordinary way, when the Holy One meets us face-to-face, most of us, like Isaiah, become strikingly aware of our humanness, and the vast chasm between us and the expectations of

the Holy. And so Isaiah cowers in confession about his unclean lips, and the plight of the humans he claims as his community.

Shockingly, I have seen something similar when I have encountered parishioners who have not attended worship in a while, even when those encounters are in the produce section of the grocery store. Suddenly, without any provocation on my part, I begin hearing the list of reasons why that person has been absent from worship. Or I may meet a community member at the fair, and they feel obligated to list for me all of their excuses for not being engaged in any faith community. There is an expectation of guilt-laden confession leading to absolution, and a “Get out of jail FREE” card! Perhaps we have our expectations a bit confused!

I heard someone say this week that God does not demand our expert **capability** when calling us to a form of ministry. God wants our **availability**, and then **God will make us capable**. God wants us to be like the child that is eager to volunteer for anything, anywhere, any time. And then God will lay out the plan and give us the gifts to accomplish the tasks.

BUT, oft-times we adults get an inkling that God is calling us, and we respond by saying, “Oh that is not on my agenda!” Or, “I don’t have time right now.” “I am not ready . . . I will do that when all the stars align.” or, “There must be someone more capable than me who can accomplish that.” Perhaps you feel too inexperienced, or too old. You know the list of excuses!! And yet, God just requests our availability: “Whom shall I send and who will go for us?” Instead of being honored that God has chosen to call us, we treat the invitation as an inconvenience. How pleased God would be if even a few of us responded with **eagerness**: “Oo, Oo, Oo, pick me, pick me, please pick me!!”

God is not calling us to inconvenience us. God is inviting us to a Sacred Creative Vocation. That means using God-given gifts, skills, talents, and passions to be **change agents** as part of the Body of Christ. Those called to a Sacred Creative Vocation are primarily NOT professionals and those with high name recognition. God is again calling ordinary believers to do extraordinary ministries. Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel states that “We are all called to interfere with injustice ~ with all that recreates authentic life.” That means that we intentionally partner with God to create

for joy and meaning in lives that have known prejudice, oppression, or any other form of injustice.

Getting back to Isaiah, the already active prophet, God was disrupting his vocation which had become all too comfortable, in order to commission him to engage in a much more risky endeavor. After being cleansed of his guilt, Isaiah was called to confront those who were using their power to abuse others. God was calling Isaiah to a new ministry...after all these years. And Isaiah made himself available, and God made Isaiah capable of disrupting injustice effectively.

Is God calling you, or me, or us to something new? Individually or corporately, will we respond that we are available? Or will we have a list of excuses for not being willing to engage in something new and unfamiliar? What is the injustice we may be called to disrupt? And what gifts will God develop within us to make us capable of that ministry?

Unfortunately at this point in history, there are many forms of injustice that our faith in Christ calls us to confront, several of which are on the news every . single . day. (Racism, sexism, homophobia, economic injustice, corruption of the powerful, gun violence, domestic violence, addiction, lack of health care . . . ) Will it take six-winged seraphs to get your attention? Or will you make yourself available by following your passion, and bring one corner of the world closer to the reign of Christ?

May this Franciscan Benediction from the middle ages inspire and move each of us today:

***May God bless you with discomfort  
At easy answers, half-truths, and superficial relationships  
So that you may live deep within your heart.***

***May God bless you with anger  
At injustice, oppression, and exploitation of people,  
So that you may work for justice, freedom and peace.***

**“Sacred Creative Vocation”**

August 11, 2019 ~ Pentecost 9C ~ Sacred Earth, Sacred Work

Rev. Beckie Sweet

*May God bless you with tears  
To shed for those who suffer pain, rejection, hunger and war,  
So that you may reach out your hand to comfort them  
And to turn their pain into joy.*

*And may God bless you with enough foolishness  
To believe that you can make a difference in the world,  
So that you can do what others claim cannot be done  
To bring justice and kindness to all our children and the poor.*

*Amen.*