

Sermon Notes – May 30, 2021
(Isaiah 6:1-8 & Luke 5:1-11)

This morning, I want to talk a little bit about the passage from Isaiah and a little bit from Luke's gospel. Have you ever heard the story about when George Bush was President and Queen Elizabeth came to visit and First Lady, Barbara Bush and the Washington mayor took her to visit in Washington? They took her to visit some rehabilitated neighborhoods in Washington; they had been rehabilitated from crime and drugs and all kinds of violence. They took her to visit a particular lady in the neighborhood there. When the limousine pulled up, here came Queen Elizabeth with her security and the security from Barbara Bush and the Washington mayor. They went to the door, knocked, and this lady came. Guess what she did in the presence of the Queen? ... She just shared some of that southern hospitality – she reached out and gave her a big ol' bear hug. You know that British protocol says that you do not hug or touch a monarch? She didn't know that.

How do you act in the presence of the Queen? ... Well, some of us would probably respond the same way that that lady did because we are southerners. But, how do you respond in the presence of Almighty God? If you walked into this room today and you knew that God was here and you saw him, how would you respond?

I heard a cute little story about a boy who was sick on Palm Sunday. He had to stay at home with his mother. His Dad and his little sister went to church and when they came home, they brought the palm branches. The little boy at lunch said, "Dad, what are all those branches for?" He said, "Well, son, when Jesus came in town on Palm Sunday, they welcomed him with branches." The little boy said, "Wouldn't you know it? -- of all the Sundays I miss, Jesus came to church today."

Well, how would we respond in the presence of God? I want you to think about Isaiah for a few moments. King Uzziah, who was the King of Judah, had just died. He was a godly king; he honored and obeyed God until toward the end of his life. He had prospered; he had a reign of

prosperity; the economy was booming; he had enlarged the army; he had enlarged Judah's territory. Overall, he'd been a good king, but toward the end, he kind of got proud and he began to take on some of the duties of the priests in the temple. And, he was punished by God. In his later years, he got sick with leprosy and died. The Israelites were grieving and Isaiah the prophet was grieving. Isaiah went to the temple. You know, lots of people come to church for a lot of different reasons – sometimes, they come out of habit; they come because of their relationship with God; they come to just impress other people; they come to search for God. We come for all kinds of reasons and God knows that. But that day, Isaiah went in his grief and he had an experience with God that was life-changing. The people of Israel and Judah had disobeyed God. They were committing all kinds of moral sins; they were worshipping idols or no God; and they were disobedient. When Isaiah goes in with his grief to worship God, he has this experience. The scriptures give us an image of some “angel-like” creatures (seraphim) who covered their faces and their feet. They started saying, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty!” They were singing. When Jewish literature repeated something three times, it meant that they wanted you to emphasize it. They wanted you to get what that attribute of God was -- he was a God of holiness – “Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God.” It means God is separate from human kind. Holiness meant perfection and moral purity – God without sin; He is perfect and He is separate from us. **I want you to know that Isaiah was awed and overwhelmed with who he was in relationship with God. He was humbled and he began to confess his sins.** He said, “Lord, I am a man of unclean lips and I live amongst people of unclean lips.” He knew how the Judahites were. God had an angel, an angel-creature, to take a coal from the fire and touch it upon his lips. I can't explain all that, but it said, “Your guilt is taken away. Your sins are atoned for – “in other words, “Isaiah, you are forgiven.” And then God said, “Who will go for me?” Isaiah said, “Here am I, Lord. Send me.”

I want you to notice something in our gospel lesson from Luke today: Jesus had been teaching; he'd been in the boat; and all of a sudden, he finishes teaching and says, “Here, Peter. Put your boat out deeper in the sea and cast your nets over the side.” Peter catches this boat-load of fish;

the boat is about to sink and the net is about to break. I want you to notice what happened to Simon Peter... From one of the few times that we know, he's humbled in the presence of God and he recognized for one of the first times that Jesus was more than a man and a carpenter. He was more than somebody who just taught and preached. He was the divine Son of God. Peter was in the presence of divinity and holiness. He said, "God, I'm a sinful man. Depart from me." Isaiah said, "Woe is me, for I am a man of unclean lips." *When we come in the presence of God, we are to come in humility and reverence and awe-ness of his holiness and his glory because God is separate and distinctly different from us - He is perfect and sinless.*

But, yet, I also want to remind you of something else: Jesus said, "When you come to God, you should call him "Abba," meaning "Daddy." He is your father; he loves you; he cares for you. You see, Peter noticed that Jesus not only preached and taught and healed people, but he cared about their daily livelihood. He gave them more fish than they'd seen in their lifetime in one catch. **Jesus was this divine powerful figure and Jesus says that we should approach God as our Father - Daddy.**

Did you notice something else in that story of Peter? - He says, "Don't be afraid. From now on, you are going to catch men. Don't be afraid." I want to say that when you come into the awesomeness of God, I hope it humbles us because we're reminded of who he is, his greatness, his sovereignty, and his holiness. I hope we come confessing our sins. Confession is not just blabbing our sins to everybody - it is being honest with God and sharing with him the things we've done wrong and who we are. When we confess, God gives us His forgiveness, grace, and mercy. And when we experience his holiness and experience his forgiveness, He calls us to a life of service. "Here am I, Lord. Send me. Here am I, Lord. Send me."

I heard a wonderful story told by Dr. Howard Hendricks, a book author and a Christian Educator. In one of his books, he said, "I was coming back from a Christian Conference, and I was at the airport. I was stuck on the plane; we were waiting on the news from the tower that we could

depart from the airport. We kept sitting on that plane, waiting for take-off. Everybody was getting impatient, griping, and complaining. The flight attendants were trying to be nice. Most of them were, but there was one who was exceptionally poised, controlled, nice, and courteous to everybody. When she got back to where I was sitting, I asked her, 'Do you mind if I write a letter of recommendation to the airline to tell them how controlled and poised you have been to all these people?' She said, 'Sir, I get paid by the airline, but I work for Jesus. This morning in devotions, my husband and I had prayer, and we prayed that I would be a good representative of Jesus Christ on this flight. And, I'm trying with God's help.'" Isn't that a good way to say it? What if we all did that and said, ***"You know, I'm a good representative of Jesus. God's called me to be a representative of him - whether I work, am retired, go to school, or whatever. My work is not just that job over here, but I live daily for Jesus Christ."***

I want you to notice three things in that story of Luke and Isaiah:

One is, when we come to worship, it should draw us closer to God. We should be humbled and confess our sins and draw closer to him, knowing that he loves us and he wants to extend his grace and mercy and forgiveness to us.

Then, worship teaches us about compassion and love for other people. Isaiah would be given a message later on to go and preach doom and judgement to the people of Judah, because they were disobedient to God. But Isaiah chapters 40-66, are all about God's hope, comfort, forgiveness, and the coming of a Messiah who would save the nation of Israel and all people. He had a heavy message to proclaim, but God also gave him comfort and hope. God teaches us to care about other people. I don't know of any institution that teaches people more about the love and compassion of God than the church. *Mother Teresa, one of the Catholic Sisters in Calcutta who worked with the poor and needy in India, was one time asked by a reporter, "How in the world do you have the strength to do what you do?"* (Mother Teresa worked with some of the worst people -

the sickest, the neediest, and the poorest in the community.) She said, “When I look in their faces, I see the eyes of Christ.” You see, Jesus called us to love our neighbor as ourselves -- “Love, as I have loved you.” I don’t know of a place where we learn more about the compassion and love of God and love for others, than we do in church, in worship.

Worship calls us to a life of service. When we have really experienced a relationship with God and know him, we want to serve him.

I want you to notice something else about Jesus. Have you ever thought about the fact that when he called the disciples, he didn’t call some rabbis, priests, or prophets? He called lay people – fisherman, tax accountants, and business men -- ***to serve him, because God calls all of us to serve him – whoever we are, wherever we are. God can use every one of us – any place, anytime, and anywhere to do his will, if we are available.***

I heard an interesting comment: “Lots of us have ability, but do we have availability?” What God wants is you and me to be available to be used. He will work in and through who we are and what we have in gifts, talents, and resources we have. Somebody once said, “Ability without availability is a liability.” Have you ever thought about that? “Ability without availability is a liability.” God wants to use you and me and he calls us to love and care for one another.

When we come to worship, it’s about drawing closer to God. It’s about experiencing his holiness and his reverence -- his presence. It’s about knowing him in a deeper way. It’s about being honest with him and telling him about our sins, what we’ve done wrong, and who we are and experiencing his grace and forgiveness. And then, it’s about hearing his call to go and serve him – wherever we are – in the nursing home, at the workplace, at school. Wherever you are, just like that lady on the airline. “Lord, help me be a good representative of you today.”

You know, it's interesting that people may not know what to experience when they come to church. My brother (that's two years older than me) raises beagle pups. Several years ago, he had a young man about twenty or twenty-one years of age who came by his house to buy a beagle puppy. My brother invited him to church. He said, "Do you have a church home?" The boy said, "No." My brother said, "Well, my wife and I would love to have you come visit us at church sometime, and we'll take you to lunch afterwards." The guy said, "What's church?" My brother said, "You mean you've never been to church?" The young man said, "No, sir." My brother said, "You've never been to a wedding at a church or a funeral?" He said, "No. I've never had anybody in my immediate family to die." "You don't have any brothers and sisters getting married?" He said, "Nope." My brother said, "Well, let me tell you about church," and he stood there and talked to him about church. He said, "I sit on the back row, so you won't feel embarrassed. Just come on in and sit on the back row with us." About three weeks later, that young man showed up at church. My brother and his wife took him out to lunch. As time went on, he began to make a habit out of coming to church. And, as time went on, he became a follower of Jesus Christ. Who would have thought, in our day and time, that somebody wouldn't have known about church and what you expect? But, that young man was touched and blessed by the holiness of God in receiving God's grace and forgiveness. God has called us to experience him and to go forth and share it with the world.

So, when you come to church, I pray that it draws you closer to God and I pray that you know that this is the place where you learn more about the compassion and love of God than anywhere else. And, I pray that you will hear God's call to serve him with a life patterned after Jesus Christ. May God bless you this day. Amen.