

Send Me

Isaiah 6:1-8

Introduction

In these eight short verses, we see a transformation of a man. Martin Luther called it a “resurrection.” Isaiah has two lines, and they couldn’t be more different. He begins by fearfully crying, *“Woe is me! For I am ruined”* (v. 5) and a few minutes later boldly asserts, *“Here I am! Send me”* (v. 8). What makes the difference? Let’s take a closer look at what’s happening.

Vision of God (v. 1-4)

Isaiah *saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up* (v. 1). When God is pictured sitting, it is either as judge or king. Here, He is on a throne. He is King. Isaiah sees God in all His splendor, glory, majesty, and holiness. *The train of His robe fills the temple* (v. 1). The teaching in Jewish theology was that the presence of God rested with His people on the mercy seat, the lid of the Ark of the Covenant in the Holy Place of the temple. However, the temple cannot contain God, as merely His train fills the temple, and He is lifted up above it. Seated on His throne, He reigns supreme over all creation. As the seraphim said, *the whole earth is full of His glory* (v. 3).

Confession (v. 5)

It is a fearful thing to be in the presence of God. When Isaiah found himself there, he had one response possible, *“Woe is me! For I am ruined; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!”* (v. 5). Isaiah has a true self-revelation when he finds himself in the presence of the almighty, holy Lord of lords. He is unclean and as good as dead. This should be our attitude at the beginning of the Divine Service when we have Confession and Absolution. As the Prayer of Confession in Divine Service #3 reminds us: we are each *poor, miserable sinners*.

Cleansing (v. 6-7)

Then a seraph flew to Isaiah and touched his lips with a coal he had taken off the altar with tongs. And he said, *“Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for”* (v. 7). Martin Luther said about this: *Isaiah is raised from the dead as he is forgiven and cleansed by Word and sign. He goes from being lost (undone) to boldly saying, “Here I am! Send me”* (LW 16:73-74).

What This Points to

This action points forward to Jesus Christ in two ways. The cleansing power of fire points to the cleansing of Jesus Christ, as John the Baptist said about him, *“He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire”* (Matthew 3:11). As Isaiah is cleansed, his guilt is removed. Jesus Christ is the *atonement sacrifice* (1 John 2:2). Isaiah’s sin is atoned for by the death of Jesus. *If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness* (1 John 1:9).

Commissioning (v. 8)

Now that Isaiah has been forgiven and cleansed, God can commission him for the task at hand. He asks the question: *“Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” (v. 8)*. Notice, He hasn’t said what the mission is, yet. The important thing isn’t what the job is, but that God has a job to be done. Normally, if someone says, “Will you do me a favor?” we answer with the question, “What is it?” We want to know what the favor is before we commit ourselves. Is it something we are willing to do? Is it something we can do? Is it something we have the time to do? But none of that matters when God has a job for us. He is God. He is supreme. Basically, God isn’t even offering Isaiah the opportunity to volunteer. He made this appearance to call and commission Isaiah to be His prophet. Isaiah is the only one there as God says, “Whom shall I send?”

“Send Me!”

Isaiah knows that he can do whatever God has in store. Before, he was overcome with sin and guilt. Now, his lips have been touched with the fire. His guilt has been removed. He is eager to do whatever God wants him to do. He is that grateful for the forgiveness he has received. That should be our response as well. We should be so grateful for the forgiveness and life we have received from Jesus that we eagerly accept the call He gives us to serve Him.

Our Mission

Now, God isn’t going to call any of us to be a prophet. That office is closed. He probably won’t call anyone here to be a missionary to a foreign land. But He has other callings for us that are just as important. In fact, we all have already received callings. He has called some of us to be spouses, parents, grandparents, or great-grandparents. He has called us to live in certain communities. He has called us to be members of a church. He has cleansed us through the waters of Holy Baptism. He has placed us where He wants us. He has given us a mission, as we affirm in the LWML pledge: we pledge Him our willing service wherever and whenever He has need of us. Let us take this to heart, and say with Isaiah, **“HERE I AM! SEND ME.”**

*And the peace of God,
Which surpasses all understanding,
Will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*
