

Pastor Jon's Sermon from the weekend of February 5-6, 2022

“We're Not Worthy”

Text: Isaiah 6:1-13 and Luke 5:1-11

What is revealed today in this season of Epiphany is that God prefers not to work alone. God calls flawed humans, like you and me, to carry out God's mission of healing, justice, and forgiveness in the world.

We see it time after time in the Bible... God calling the least expected people to do God's work in the world. Do you recall that Moses was a murderer and had trouble speaking to large crowds, David had an affair with Bathsheba and had her husband killed, Rahab was a foreign prostitute that God called to help hide Hebrew spies, Mary was from Nazareth when God called her to bear the Christ child.

But thanks be to God that God doesn't just call perfect, powerful and put together people. Otherwise none of us would feel like we measure up or could possibly serve God. There is hope for all of us.

I find myself at home in these stories of the call of Isaiah and the call of the fishermen... especially the fishermen, because I love to fish. Both of these stories remind me of the old SNL skit and movie Wayne's World. They film Wayne's world from their parents basement. Whenever Wayne and Garth, played by Mike Myers and Dana Carvey, are in the presence of something great... like a rock star, they genuflect in unison saying, “We're not worthy, we're not worthy.” Party on Wayne. Party on Garth.

Both Isaiah and Simon Peter essentially say, we're not worthy of witnessing this encounter with God and being in God's presence. They then confess their sinfulness and fall on their knees.

And yet after an encounter with God and God's grace, Isaiah comes to say, “Here am I; send me!” Simon Peter, sees the miracle catch of fish and falls on his knees saying, “Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!” But the Lord didn't go away. Jesus remained in the boat with Simon Peter. When they got to shore, Jesus called him to fish for people.

Sometimes it takes something that stops us in our tracks before you realize this could be an encounter with God. It could be a simple encounter with nature. Or it could be an obstacle or hitting rock bottom can cause us seek out God. For both of these characters, their God encounters caused them to make some big life changes and take a different path in life to follow God's call. Do you still believe God encounters are possible?

For Isaiah, he was going about his daily work in the Temple in Jerusalem. Isaiah saw a vision of God with Seraphs with 6 wings singing Holy, Holy, Holy. The Temple was filled with smoke... a nod to the Exodus story when smoke meant God was present. But Isaiah said, "Woe is me!" I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips; yet my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!" In other words, "I'm not worthy." Isaiah admits he is lost and someone who sins with his lips or words. Can you relate to Isaiah when he says, "I am lost?"

Then, like a scene out of a sci-fi movie, seraphs flew to Isaiah and touched his lips with a live coal. It was so hot the seraphs used tongs. The purpose is for forgiveness. Hot coals are cleansing. This must have hurt. Sometimes admitting our sins and faults cut us to the bone. Forgiveness gave Isaiah a new path in life... to speak a hard word to people who turned away from God. Even if a small group of people would listen and repent, Isaiah was doing his job.

In Psalm 51, David says after he was caught in adultery, "The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise." Admitting your own sin and guilt... your role in the problem... is the first step in the healing power of forgiveness... having a broken heart over what you have done or left undone opens your heart for healing. Saying, I'm sorry.

Finally, in our Gospel Jesus, invites some fishermen, already back at shore washing their nets in the midst of a disappointing outing. They got skunked. But they listened to Jesus and put their nets out again. This time into the deep water. The deep water could refer to chaos for the ancient hearer of scripture. Genesis 1 talked about the waters of chaos. Chaos threatens God's purposes of order, security, and

blessing. The church can't be afraid to cast our nets into the chaos and unrest of the world. God will meet us there.

To their surprise, they caught so many fish that their nets were breaking and the boats were sinking. Simon Peter says, "I'm not worthy to be in God's presence found in this abundant catch." "I am a sinful man". Jesus said, "Do not be afraid, from now on you will be catching people." At shore, Simon Peter and the Zebedee brothers left everything and followed Jesus.

Romans 3:23 says, "...all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." But, God is filled with an abundance of grace. Even as both Isaiah and Simon Peter recognized their unworthiness, God offered grace and forgiveness, and called them to follow. These stories remind us that God can meet us in the ordinary, mundane tasks of life. God can call us out of our chaos into sharing the abundant love and grace of God.

None of us deserves God's unconditional love for us. But God sees us through the lens of Jesus. God offers us grace in Jesus Christ on the cross and in the resurrection.

God prefers not to work alone. God calls you. You are enough.

Amen!