

EPIPHANY 5
ISAIAH 6:1-8
1 CORINTHIANS 15:1-11
LUKE 5:1-11
FEBRUARY 9, 9, 2019

YEAR C

When we enter the house of the Lord we enter a place not like any other place. When we enter the house of the Lord we enter a holy place where we expect to see our holy God. We come into the house of the Lord into a place filled with wonder and majesty. It is a place where miracles happen and where God's word is read and proclaimed. When we come into the house of the Lord we know that this is not your ordinary every day activity. It is not like anything else you do at any other time in your week. You come to the house of the Lord and you are in the presence of God. You can expect good things to happen here. You can expect to find peace, hope and love. Your faith will grow and you will know that your sins are forgiven. We enter the house of the Lord and the Lord is here among us. We cannot hide from God in this sanctuary. God fills this place and the house shakes at God's presence.

Isaiah 6:3, 4 And one called to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory." The pivots on the thresholds shook at the voices of those who called, and the house filled with smoke.

Isaiah was in the house of the Lord. He was in the house of the Lord and he knew that God was present. Isaiah knew that this was no ordinary house. This would be no ordinary experience but the experience of a life time. This story of the call of Isaiah helps us understand that coming into the house of the Lord opens all kinds of possibilities even as it challenges us in our lives. Isaiah describes the scene in the Temple of the Lord. There were seraphim present and they constantly flew around the Temple of the Lord worshipping God. "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God of hosts. The whole earth is filled with his glory." The threshold shook as they worshipped and the house was filled with smoke. The Lord God was there and God filled the temple. This was no ordinary event. This was worship in the house of the Lord. The Temple was a

holy place where our holy God was present. This was an occasion for God to be among God's people and a time for Isaiah to see God and receive God's revelation and God's direction.

Isaiah 6:5 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!"

We come from the outside of the church into the house of God. We know that God ministers to us in this place. We know that we will hear the revelation of God's love and mercy. We believe our sins will be forgiven and we know that someone will pray for our concerns. I am not going to tell you that you are sinners. You know this without me telling you. I know that I have fallen short of God's expectation. I know that my words are not adequate without the Holy Spirit pushing me and guiding me. We know that we are an unclean people with unclean words among an unclean people yet we continue to come to the house of the Lord. You have come to expect good things in the house of the Lord yet there are some that feel uncomfortable in the house of God. They feel they are not good enough to enter this house. You have heard the reasons for not being in church and so have I. One says they have not been here for so long that they would be embarrassed to come back. Another says he was hurt here and cannot bear to face the one that did the hurting. Still another says there are memories that prevent them from returning. The result is that people do not experience the blessings of the Lord. They do not see the majesty of God or hear the seraphim as they worship.

Isaiah thought he was dead because of his shortcomings. He thought he was condemned because he was in the presence of God with all of his uncleanness. Isaiah felt unworthy but God had other plans. Isaiah hid his face from the Lord. God did not leave Isaiah with his face and his life hidden but touched Isaiah's life in a special way. God did not leave Isaiah in his guilt and his shame but lifted him up and restored him to life and peace.

Isaiah 6:6, 7 Then one of the seraphs flew to me, holding a live coal that had been taken from the altar with a pair of tongs. 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.”

The Lord does not leave any of us in our sin. God does not leave us with our heads buried or our lives hidden. God touches our lives in a special way setting us free. In our reading from Luke 5 Jesus touched Simon Peter in a special way. The fishermen worked all night and caught nothing. They were cleaning their equipment when Jesus asked Simon to push out into the deep water for a catch of fish. Although Simon was an expert who knew fishing he listened to Jesus. Simon would have known that the place for fishing is not necessarily in the deep water in the middle of the day but he did what Jesus asked. The result was a catch of fish that threatened to tear the net and sink the boat. Simon experienced the presence of God as Jesus stood with him. Simon realized he was in the presence of someone special. He realized he was in the presence of God and hid his face. Simon knew he was an ordinary sinner in the presence of God and bowed down in embarrassment and inadequacy. Jesus did not leave him there. Simon was not left in his sin, guilt, shame or sense of inadequacy. Simon was set free. He was set free to become a follower of Jesus Christ.

Isaiah 6:8 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!”

Isaiah fell on his face because he immediately knew he was sinful. No one had to tell him he was sinful because in presence of God we all know our limitations. We know our sin but the Lord does not leave us in our sin. God declares that we are not guilty and that our shame is gone. God delivers us from our sin and sets us free. For Isaiah, being set free meant serving the Lord. For Simon, John and James being set free also meant following Jesus.

When we come into the presence of God we know that God had the power and the right to destroy us because of our sin. We know we have fallen short of God's expectations but the Lord does not leave us in our sin. The Lord sets us free from our sins and shortcomings. When you and I have been set free by the Lord we want to serve the Lord. We want others to also know the freedom we received and continue to receive. You came to the house of the Lord from the ordinary events of your lives. You came into the presence of the Lord and you heard words of forgiveness. Your response is to hear the call of the Lord. You respond by reaching out in love for those that are hurting and to those that have not heard this message. We want other people to know and experience what we have experienced today. Simon, James and John left the fish and their equipment and followed Jesus. Isaiah responded to God's call saying, "Here am I, send me!" God sent him out to God's people. You have been set free and lifted up. Will respond by following Jesus and lifting up God's people? The Lord is in the house. Allow God to touch you and to equip you. You have been set free. AMEN