

Isaiah 6:1-8; Epiphany 5
February 10 & 11, 2019

It never ceases to amaze me how God can turn an ordinary day into an extraordinary one in just a matter of minutes. God has a way of interrupting us in the middle of an ordinary day and say to us – *I made you look*. For most people, when we have one of those life-changing experiences, they are usually not expected. They have a way of just coming out of the blue. The Bible is full of those kinds of days. This morning, we see the prophet Isaiah being called by God in one of those life-changing moments in life. After this day, Isaiah's life would never be the same.

Isaiah saw something that only a few people have ever been allowed to see. He saw God. He saw God sitting on his throne in all of his glory. Isaiah describes: **"In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord, high and exalted, seated on a throne; and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him were seraphim, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying."** What a life changing moment that Isaiah saw. Every detail describes a God who is almighty and powerful. It also shows a God who cannot stand evil. Even the angels had to cover their faces with their wings in the presence of the holy God. When they spoke the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke.

Isaiah knew he was in the presence of God. This was a God that was 3 times holy. This was a God who was bigger, stronger and holier than anything in the heavens and earth. All Isaiah could do was to drop to the ground and say: **"Woe to me."** As a sinful human being, Isaiah knew that he could not stand in the presence of the almighty God. Yet, God was not done teaching him a lesson that day.

You see that's what God does. This incredible holy God who cannot stand sinfulness is also a God who loves us just as perfectly. Peter would also learn that lesson in our Gospel reading today. Peter would also experience one of those life-changing moments along the shore of the Sea of Galilee. Peter has had one of those days when nothing seems to be going right. He has worked and toiled all night and has nothing to show for it. Peter is tired. All that was left was to clean the nets and get ready to catch fish the next night and go home to get some rest. It was time to chalk it up to one of those days that it is just best to let it end.

Peter and Jesus had already met. It just so *"happens,"* that Jesus comes along the shore followed by a large crowd. He gets in to Peter's boat and asks Peter to take him out a bit so he can preach better to the crowd that was following. Peter's ordinary day was about to get to be an extra-ordinary day. And then it happens – the teacher Jesus – who probably knew very little about fishing tells Peter to go out once again and go fishing. Everything about Jesus' words seemed wrong. It was the wrong time to fish. It was the wrong place to fish. Not of it really made any sense. But then Peter makes one of those extra-ordinary statements: **"Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets."** Did you catch it? **BECAUSE YOU SAY SO!** Jesus' request didn't make much sense, but since he was the one asking, Peter says OK. And you saw what happened.

God has a way of doing that, doesn't he? He asks us to believe things that seem absurd to us. He asks us to believe that God came to this world to pay for our sins. He asks us to believe that through the waters of baptism that our sins are forgiven. When we come to the Lord's table for communion, he says that he gives us his body and his blood. As Isaiah stood there in the presence of God, he wanted Isaiah to believe that his sins were forgiven. **"Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. With it he touched my mouth and said, "See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for."**

You see God specializes in broken people. He longs to be in the lives of people who mess up in life. The people that God was calling Isaiah to serve were broken people. They had messed up. Any other "god" that someone could have imagined would have written them off a long time again. This God would be different. The God who caused angels to cover their faces in his presence says: **"your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for."**

Broken people cannot buy forgiveness by being sorry enough. They can't earn forgiveness by living obediently enough. You see, forgiveness is taken entirely out of our hands and placed into the hands of the Savior whose scars tell the story of unconditional love. Jesus fought the fight that we could not fight. He fought the war we could not win. He touches our

lips with a coal from his altar and says to you and me: **“your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for.”** That’s what happened on the extra-ordinary day when Isaiah saw God. God’s holiness brought terror to Isaiah. God’s love brought forgiveness. A miracle of filling the nets with fish brought Peter to realize that he was a sinful man in the presence of God. God’s love brought forgiveness to the hearts of sinful people. God doesn’t leave us. He doesn’t wipe us from the face of the earth. He loves us. He forgives us. He asks us to believe that a person dies believing in Jesus, they get eternal life.

God’s forgiveness is the most unexpected thing to the human heart. When God speaks, we need to listen. When Jesus makes a promise, he puts an exclamation point after it. You can believe it because Jesus said it. God is so intent on making us part of his family, he doesn’t let our stupidity, weakness, indifference or even out right rebellion stop him from accomplishing his plan for us. He loves us unconditionally so that we can be a part of his family.

Some may ask, *“How could God forgive me?”* In the same way that he forgave the prophet Isaiah as Isaiah stood before him trembling. In the same way that he forgave a fisherman named Peter. In the same way that he forgives you today. He loves you because of his grace. God didn’t love Isaiah because of WHO ISAIAH IS. He loved Isaiah IN SPITE OF WHO Isaiah is. God knows all the ugliness that is in your heart as he knew the ugliness that was in the heart of Isaiah and Peter. Yet, he still loves us. That’s crazy. But that’s what God does. He takes the ordinary and makes it extraordinary. He takes sinners and makes them holy. That’s the kind of crazy God we have. So, the next time you have one of those ordinary days that becomes an extraordinary day, or an ordinary day that stays an ordinary day, remember that you have an extraordinary God that walks with you every day. Amen.