

Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time – February 7, 2010 – Good Shepherd Parish

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 6:1-2a, 3-8

In the year King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a high and lofty throne, with the train of his garment filling the temple. Seraphim were stationed above.

They cried one to the other, “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts! All the earth is filled with his glory!” At the sound of that cry, the frame of the door shook and the house was filled with smoke.

Then I said, “Woe is me, I am doomed! For I am a man of unclean lips, living among a people of unclean lips; yet my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!” Then one of the seraphim flew to me, holding an ember that he had taken with tongs from the altar.

He touched my mouth with it, and said, “See, now that this has touched your lips, your wickedness is removed, your sin purged.” Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send? Who will go for us?” “Here I am,” I said; “send me!”

Responsorial Psalm: Ps 138:1-2, 2-3, 4-5, 7-8

(1c) In the sight of the angels I will sing your praises, Lord.

I will give thanks to you, O LORD, with all my heart,
for you have heard the words of my mouth;
in the presence of the angels I will sing your praise;
I will worship at your holy temple
and give thanks to your name.

In the sight of the angels I will sing your praises, Lord.

Because of your kindness and your truth;
for you have made great above all things
your name and your promise.
When I called, you answered me;
you built up strength within me.

In the sight of the angels I will sing your praises, Lord.

All the kings of the earth shall give thanks to you, O LORD,
when they hear the words of your mouth;
and they shall sing of the ways of the LORD:
“Great is the glory of the LORD.”

In the sight of the angels I will sing your praises, Lord.

Your right hand saves me.
The LORD will complete what he has done for me;
your kindness, O LORD, endures forever;
forsake not the work of your hands.

In the sight of the angels I will sing your praises, Lord.

Scripture Reading: 1 Corinthians 15:1-11

I am reminding you, brothers and sisters, of the gospel I preached to you, which you indeed received and in which you also stand. Through it you are also being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. For I handed on to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures; that he was buried; that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures; that he appeared to Cephas, then to the Twelve. After that, Christ appeared to more than five hundred brothers at once, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. After that he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one born abnormally, he appeared to me. For I am the least of the apostles, not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me has not been ineffective. Indeed, I have toiled harder than all of them; not I, however, but the grace of God that is with me. Therefore, whether it be I or they, so we preach and so you believed.

Gospel: Luke 5:1-11

While the crowd was pressing in on Jesus and listening to the word of God, he was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret. He saw two boats there alongside the lake; the fishermen had disembarked and were washing their nets. Getting into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, he asked him to put out a short distance from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the crowds from the boat. After he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, “Put out into deep water and lower your nets for a catch.” Simon said in reply, “Master, we have worked hard all night and have caught nothing, but at your command I will lower the nets.” When they had done this, they caught a great number of fish and their nets were tearing. They signaled to their partners in the other boat to come to help them. They came and filled both boats so that the boats were in danger of sinking. When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at the knees of Jesus and said, “Depart from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man.” For astonishment at the catch of fish they had made seized him and all those with him, and likewise James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who were partners of Simon. Jesus said to Simon, “Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men.” When they brought their boats to the shore, they left everything and followed him.

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INVITATION TO PRAY

Pause for a few moments of silence and enter more deeply into the presence of God.

Proclaim the Scriptures out loud.

As you listen to the gospel be attentive to a word, a phrase, a question, an image, or a feeling that emerges. Reflect on this quietly or share it aloud.

INVITATION TO REFLECT

Sunday contains a surprise development. This Fifth Sunday will find three of the greatest witnesses in the Bible—Isaiah, Paul and Peter—expressing their own worthlessness. What is your attitude toward worthiness? Do you agree with today's psychologized sentiment that "I AM worthy" or "I'M ok, YOU'RE ok" or "I buy this product because I'm WORTH it"? Let's look at these three witnesses. Do they think they are worthy?

Isaiah receives a vision of heaven itself ([First Reading](#)). The Lord is seated on a high and lofty throne; the Seraphim angel choir are crying out, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts! All the earth is filled with his glory!" * Isaiah reacts with shame, or so it seems. "Woe is me, I am doomed! For I am a man of unclean lips, living among a people of unclean lips; yet my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!" In response, an angel swoops down with a burning coal to "cleanse" his lips!!!! He is doomed, alright, but doomed to be made clean through suffering, to be made able to speak of God. Second, St. Paul says that Christ appeared to him last of all, as to one born abnormally ([Second Reading](#)). "For I am the least of the apostles, not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God." Unworthy, but did the grace of God discard him? No, it appointed him an Apostle, even though he had never even met Jesus. Then there is the famous [Gospel](#) story. Jesus tells Peter and James and John to fish in the deep water (where they had been fishing and fishing and fishing all night with no result). Without warning, their nets are bloated with fish. Peter cries out, "Depart from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man." Astonishment had seized him and all those with him.

So we have a problem. Isn't the experience of God supposed to lead us to peace, forgiveness, and joy, these instead of shame? A distinction is needed. The reaction of all three figures is not really shame. They do not conclude that they are each worthless, which is the meaning of shame—you know the feeling: "If people ever saw the real me, they would run away." No, instead, they are finding their real place in reality. They are expressing a kind of humility. Each of these men had been forced to compare himself directly with the presence of God. But when they met the holiness of God head-on, they were able to see their own humanness, as full of holes as a sponge. They could not pretend that they shone like the stars because they saw the real star bursting with light. Experience of God let them understand that they are far, far, far less than God. This is not bad, it is good. God can make us holy, our own elegance cannot. We can be proud to be unworthy if reception of God's love is the result. So, in each Mass we echo the Roman centurion when he says, "Lord I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof. Only say the word and I shall be healed." When we react with shame, God does not say in return, "I reject you," but "I love you dearly. Come be with me, you fine human being."

* For the sake of interest, this vision happened "in the year King Uzziah died." According to biblical records Uzziah reigned for 52 years (c. 791-739 BC), but Assyrian records indicate that he reigned for 42 years (c. 783-742). In his latter years he was stricken with what the Bible understood as leprosy and therefore could not rule or worship with others. For a brief biography of King Uzziah, go to http://www.geocities.com/thekingsofisrael/biography_Uzziah.html. For a painting by Rembrandt of Uzziah with leprosy, see <http://www.masterpiece-paintings-gallery.com/rembrandt-uzziah.htm>.

INVITATION TO GROUP SHARING

1. God knocked Paul down and blinded him. He must have had some big plans in mind for him. Could God just as well call us to do small things first, to take baby steps till we get used to saying yes?
2. List some of the dangers of the "deep". What is not there for your security? What is there to threaten you? So why would you go there? What virtue do you need?
3. Where did Peter have to go in his personal life before he could "catch" people for God? Was everything up to him or did Peter receive extraordinary help? When are you on the shore and when are you in the deep?

INVITATION TO ACT

Determine a specific action (individual or group) that flows from your sharing. When choosing an individual action, determine what you will do and share it with the group. When choosing a group action, determine who will take responsibility for different aspects of the action. These should be your primary considerations.

CLOSING INVITATION TO PRAY

Give thanks to God (aloud or silently) for new insights, for desires awakened, for directions clarified, for the gift of one another's openness and sensitivity. Conclude with the following:

Father, watch over your family and keep us safe in your care, for all our hope is in you. Grant this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen