

Here I am LORD – Send Me! Isaiah 6:8 [1-13]

God is always looking for faithful men, women, youth and even children that He can support and empower to accomplish His will and purposes on this earth (2 Chronicles 16:9). He has given us a commission to be active in making disciples and to teach them all that He has commanded (Matthew 28:19-20). He wants workers, and He asks that we would pray for more workers to go out into the harvest field (Luke 10:2). God's method in building His kingdom is by using willing and obedient servants; people who open heartedly make themselves available to God's call upon their lives. For some, the call may be to overseas missions or to the ministry, but for most of us, we will be called to be ministers of the gospel even though our career paths might look much different as we live our lives in our families, social circles, neighborhood's, schools, clubs, businesses and workplaces. Wherever we are and in whatever we do, God is looking for people whom He can support to build His kingdom. For God has a plan and purpose for our lives, and a mission for each one of us to do, but the question is whether or not you and I will accept the call?

When we read about individual characters in the Bible there is a common thread that runs from the Old Testament through to the New. And that is that there is nothing particularly extraordinary about faithful men like Moses, Elijah, Isaiah, and others, at least in and of themselves. James makes that clear to us when he said, "*Elijah was a human being, even as we are.*" (James 5:17). That means he had a nature just like ours with all the typical fallen faults, weaknesses and temptations. Yet he, like many other faithful men and women of old as the book of Hebrews chapter 11 recounts, was faithful to do what God asked him to do. So then we today would do well to consider what it was that made these individuals take God up on His offer to serve, to be used mightily of Him, to suffer for Him, and to lay aside the passing pleasures of sin in exchange for the glory of God. They were ordinary human beings, but they let God do extraordinary things in their lives. One such person, William Carey who is known as the Father of Modern Missions said,

"I'm a dreamer and continue to dream of what can and will be,
"Expecting great things from God, Attempting great things for God"
— **William Carey, Biography of William Carey - the Father of Modern Christian Missions**

The truth remains that “God uses ordinary people”, even a cobbler and shoemaker by trade like William Carey, “to do extraordinary things.” To this day then, God is looking for ordinary people empowered by Him to do those extraordinary things.

And it is from our scripture reading today about Isaiah’s commissioning to service in the kingdom of God, that gives us some insight into what it is that is required for a person to come to view their own life as being a servant of God and the type of personal sacrifice that is required.

In Isaiah 6, Isaiah received a vision of God seated on His high and exalted heavenly throne. That the train of His robe filled the entire temple was a symbol of total power and authority (v.1). The apostle John’s vision of God on his heavenly throne in the heavenly temple (Revelation 4:1-9) was similar and including six winged ‘living creatures’ covering their faces just like the Seraphim. Even the seraphim, angels who minister in God’s very throne room, maintained positions of reverence, covering their eyes and their feet while flying so that they wouldn’t touch or see the holiness of God (v.2). Moses experienced such holiness in his encounter with God’s divine presence at the burning bush (Exodus 3:5) taking off his sandals as a sign of reverence and submission to mark the occasion.

The Seraphim called out to one another saying, “*Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty. The whole earth is full of His glory*” (v.3). The three-fold emphasis of God’s holiness here is meant to be forceful and resounding to the highest extent possible in order to emphasize God’s infinite holiness which is a hard thing to do or achieve using only human words. The only right posture in God’s holy, holy, holy presence as the seraphim demonstrated was to... bow, worship, and exalt while not gazing directly at the glory of God. Reverence, awe, and submissiveness to the King of Kings was the only thing that made sense. Now, add to Isaiah’s experience the fact that the foundations of the room were shaking and the room was being filled with smoke, symbolising God’s glory indwelling the entire place. Just as the power of God’s voice had terrified the Israelites at Mount Sinai and the mountain was covered with smoke (Exodus 19:18-19; 20:18-19).

In the presence of the divine and holy God, in his heavenly throne room with the experience of such a holy shaking manifestation,

including the smoking aroma, Isaiah is overcome or overwhelmed by the experience to the extent that he could not take it anymore, being immersed with glory, perfection, and holiness, he can only but do one thing and that is to cry out,
“Woe to me! I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty” (v.5).

In light of God’s perfection and holiness, Isaiah was overwhelmed by his imperfections and sinfulness. It so sickened him that he thought that he was going to die. He is dismayed in this way because anyone who saw God in the Old Testament expected to die immediately. Such was the experience of Jacob who wrestled with God all night, saw God face to face, and yet had his life spared. (Genesis 32:30) and then there was Moses who when the glory of the LORD was to pass in front of him the Lord said to Moses, “you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live.” (Exodus 33:20-23). So in the presence of the divine glory of God Isaiah easily and wholeheartedly recognised that he was unclean and that his people were unclean. But this is exactly what he needed to see. He needed to first see just how holy and wonderful God was before he could see his own inadequacies and his personal need for change and sanctification.

Only when you and I see God for Who the LORD Almighty really is can we rightly deal with the true state of our own heart, which God will graciously enable us to do. In Isaiah’s case, one of the seraphim took a burning coal from the altar before God and touched it to his mouth (v.6). The coal symbolised the holy cleansing of God sanctifying Isaiah and removing his sin (v.7). This encounter with the grace of God had to be so incredibly relieving and moving that it was something that he could never ever forget and something he would then be over eager to share with his people.

Now up to this point God had not spoken. Isaiah had only seen visions of Him, but then God asked a question. “Whom shall I send? And who will go for Us?” (v.8). The Us clearly refers to all three Persons of the Godhead, for the “I” and “Us” are used in the same sentence for the same God. This just serves to further convey the wonder, the majesty, the power, and uniqueness of God, and in this environment and asked by such a God, Isaiah’s only reasonable answer was to volunteer himself.

In v.8 he says, "Here I am. Send me!" Interestingly, God did not force Isaiah to volunteer; He merely asked if there was anyone who would go. And Isaiah said, "Hey, I'm available. I'll go."

You see God does not force us to serve Him, but instead works in our hearts so that we are the ones who actually desire to volunteer for Him. We should come to see within ourselves the attitude that Isaiah possessed of willingly taking God up on His offer to serve in the kingdom of God.

Isaiah's commissioning ends with God giving Isaiah instructions about how hard his calling is going to be in that those to whom he preached by and large would not in actual fact listen to him (vv.9-13). Does that sound similar to the world we live in today with the people we know and others who we meet? Yet, at this point, Isaiah has already committed himself. We are not given any evidence that he wanted to back out, and this is what is so remarkable. He had been so impacted by God's holiness, and the depth of his own sinfulness, and furthermore the grace of God that he was ready and willing to obey God no matter what. Now take note here, importantly Isaiah did not seek to put conditions on his obedience, this was a no strings attached deal, he simply said that he would do what God would ask even though God had not yet told him what that would be. Even when he found out that it would be a difficult calling, he did not think it was dumb idea and lose heart, and he most certainly did not back down! When we see God as Isaiah saw God, it is should be hard for us *not* to make ourselves available, and not to be put off, disheartened or dissuaded from our calling, no matter how difficult it might be. A right view of God, of ourselves, of our sin, and of grace is essential for faithfulness to what God has called us to do.

Too often, we wait for someone else to enter into a conversation with another person about life and its connection to spiritual things. Such a conversation that may eventually lead to a discussion about how, from your own perspective, the good news of the gospel has changed your life and belief system. But we would never enter into such a conversation because we are scared and do not want to risk stirring the waters, as though to speak, upsetting things in our relationship with the person concerned. When we think this way and adopt it as an attitude of our heart, we will then tend to expect others including pastors, ministry leaders or evangelists and missionaries to do all of the ministry things and speak words of truth while we just show up and support them.

I tell you today- this is not God's way! Instead, God wants us to join in with Isaiah and say that we are available and willing to go and do whatever we are asked.

The LORD Almighty wants us to have willing hearts and not pass off our responsibilities to someone else. For God has created good works for each and every one of us to do (Ephesians 2:10), and it is our responsibility to do them. We will not be judged one day by what a minister, church leader, or missionaries have done or by what other people do, but by what we do. We will each one day give an account for ourselves in front of the living and holy God.

Isaiah, an ordinary man, was willing to obey God and step out in faith to let God do extraordinary things through him.

Through this scripture God the Father, the Son - Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit has given us some insight into the perspective and attitude of heart that is required for a person to view their own life in terms of being a committed and devoted servant of God. Willing in faith to believe, take the risk, and make the right sacrifices.

The truth remains that God loves to use ordinary people just like you and me, faults and all, to do extraordinary things.

So on this very morning, God is looking for ordinary people empowered by Him to do those extraordinary things.

I ask you...

What would your life be like if you answered in the affirmative to God's call, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?"

What would our church fellowship be like if we all did it together?

If we recommitted our lives together to be and do what he has created and raised us up for such a time as this to speak God's truth when the door of opportunity opens to do so along with practically sharing God's never failing, unconditional love and acceptance with the world around us beginning right here in Drury.

Let us pray that we would come to see and value God just as Isaiah did in that we too would join our voice to vow and declare with him, "Here I am LORD! Send me!"

Will you stand and do that right now?

["Send Us!"]