

Isaiah 6:1-8
February 10, 2019 – 5th SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

I Hear the Savior Calling

☆ from the fires of guilt (vv.1-5)
☆ to the touch of compassion (vv.6-8)

Dear fellow servants and recipients of God's grace:

How could this happen again and again? A Christian caught in a tough spot or a personal tragedy puts the pen to the paper and writes a hymn that comforts and instructs the rest of us. Such was the case for a senior at our Seminary nearly fifty years ago. Mission Seminar was a big day coming on campus, but for him and his young bride the time was stricken with grief. Their first child, a little girl they named Ruth, was born in her sixth month, was baptized and then died. On the day his daughter was called home to heaven John C. Lawrenz wrote our Hymn of the Day, "I Hear the Savior Calling." So often our finest hymns well up from broken hearts and contrite cries to God alone who can comfort, guide and bless us. He turns our worst tragedies into the greatest blessings. Is your heart here? **I Hear the Savior Calling...**

☆ from the fires of guilt (vv.1-5)

Don't miss the back story on the opening verse: "***In the year that King Uzziah died....***" 1 Isaiah's ministry spanned 45 years (740 – 695 B.C.), beginning during the reign of Uzziah. Imagine a king ruling fifty-two years amid great prosperity but spiritual bankruptcy. His army of 307,500 was well trained and equipped with war machines and fortified towers. Agriculture and commerce flourished along with national pride. Judah's boundaries stretched to ancient frontiers. But King Uzziah's pride beat him. In his later years he tried to offer incense in the temple. Over 80 priests confronted and condemned his action. The king raged at the priests until the LORD disciplined him. Because of his unfaithfulness, the LORD afflicted Uzziah with leprosy until the day of his death (2 Chronicles 26:21). The leprosy kept Uzziah out of the temple the rest of his days, and Jotham, his son, governed while Uzziah lived in a separate house.² God was showing how serious He is about sin, and the lesson was not lost on young prophet Isaiah.

Hollywood never seems to picture this the way the Bible does. Reruns of *Touched by an Angel* still show such a sappy side of angels, but in the Bible the sight is always shocking. Two Christmas characters from a few weeks ago, Joseph and Mary, both needed reassuring from the angel who appeared to them. Remember? "***Joseph son of David, do not be afraid....***" "***Do not be afraid, Mary....***" (Matthew 1:20; Luke 1:30) There's something about seeing a holy angel that rattles sinners to the core.

So what if you saw many, high ranking, fiery noble angels all at once? Even more what would tear your heart would be the sight of "***the Lord sitting on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple.***" This is the Creator God who holds your first and last heartbeat in the palm of His hand, and every baby's final breath. "***Yes, and from ancient days I am he. No one can deliver out of my hand. When I act, who can reverse it?...As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.***" (Isaiah 43:13; 55:9 NIV84) Terrified? The angels were! "***Each [seraph] had six wings. With two they covered their faces. With two they covered their feet. With two they flew.*** ³***One called to another and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of Armies! The whole earth is full of his glory!***"

1 Unless marked: EHV ~ *Evangelical Heritage Version* (<http://wartburgproject.org>). NPH, © 2017. Order: 800-662-6022.

² Braun, J. A., ed. (1998). [*Sermon Studies on the Old Testament \(ILCW Series C\)*](#) (p. 86). NPH 1-800-662-6022. It was my privilege to write several sermon studies for this NPH series of commentaries, including the one on this text. [M.C. 2/09/2019]

God says He created the angels to serve believers. ***“Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?”*** (Hebrews 1:14 NIV84) So what can we learn from these angels about coming into God’s house where His Name is proclaimed in this place? They felt unworthy to look directly on God’s holiness – with two wings they covered their faces. They did not feel their life was their own to run wherever they desired – with two wings they covered their feet. Their stand tall readiness sprang into action when God commanded their service – with two wings they flew.

King Solomon helps us with this advice: ***“Guard your steps when you go to the house of God. Go near to listen rather than to offer the sacrifice of fools, who do not know that they do wrong. Do not be quick with your mouth, do not be hasty in your heart to utter anything before God. God is in heaven and you are on earth, so let your words be few. As a dream comes when there are many cares, so the speech of a fool when there are many words.”*** (Ecclesiastes 5:1-3 NIV84) Our organists work hard to prepare our hearts with pre-service music. Could we prepare better with silent prayer...listening?

Here’s a prophet of the LORD shaking like the temple foundations from the voice calling out God’s holiness. There is a good and proper time to feel the guilt of sin and cry to God about it: ***“I am doomed! I am ruined, because I am a man with unclean lips, and I dwell among a people with unclean lips, and because my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of Armies!”***

☆ to the touch of compassion (vv.6-8)

But notice: no delay! God never leaves us to grovel in our grief and shame. ***Then one of the seraphim flew to me, carrying a glowing coal in his hand, which he had taken from the altar with tongs. He touched my mouth with the coal and said, “Look, this has touched your lips, so your guilt is taken away, and your sin is forgiven.”*** That guilt that God inspired King David to say starts at our conception before we can do or say or think anything wrong, that guilt of original sin is completely ***“taken away.”*** The times we tried, but missed the target, stepped out of bounds, messed up big time – ***“your sin is forgiven.”*** Were there ever words like this so soothing to the soul? Contrite cries turn...

The miracle of sanctification happens so quickly, you almost miss it. ***Then I heard the Lord’s voice, saying, “Whom shall I send? Who will go for us?” Then I said, “Here I am. Send me!”***

In a day when people are so busy that many don’t care to join a church, what makes some so eager? And why attend so many Bible Information Classes to join a church like New Life? Even more, why would members who don’t have to take BIC keep on coming – three, four, five times; or with a different WELS pastor at every new church where they move? What is it that fires up busy people to use their gifts in cleaning, maintaining, serving, teaching Sunday School, practicing their music, volunteering their God-given gifts for building up the church of Jesus Christ? The power is in the Good News of full and free forgiveness. You can see it in the children growing into teens; they want to help wherever they can because, ***“Look, this has touched your lips, so your guilt is taken away, and your sin is forgiven.”***

Today, the Lord says, ***“Let us not become weary of doing good, because at the appointed time we will reap, if we do not give up.”*** (Galatians 6:9) Have you run into opposition, ungrateful hearts, messed up motives of your own? ***“Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”*** (Romans 12:21) Do you just feel guilty sometimes, unworthy to serve the Lord, missing the gladness of heart that He desires in His servants? Remember Peter’s prayer, the one where the Lord answered, “No, I have a better idea!” Peter prayed, ***“Go away from me, because I am a sinful man, Lord.”*** Jesus said, ***“Have no fear. From now on you will be catching people.” ...They left everything and followed him.***

When that live coal of God’s **compassion** touches you, God’s Word assures: ***“God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them.”*** (Hebrews 6:10 NIV84) When your time of service ends? Get ready with prayer: ***“The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. So ask the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into his harvest field.”*** (Luke 10:2) Touched by **compassion** they will cry: ***“Here I am. Send me!”*** Amen.

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