God's Invitation

Rev. Kyle Cuperwich

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Year C, Fifth Sunday after Epiphany
Isaiah 6:1-8; Luke 5:1-11
Grace Episcopal Church, Pemberton and St. Martin-in-the-Fields, Lumberton, NJ

I remember the first time I heard my call to ordained ministry. It was in 2008 during the spring semester of my second year at college. I was staying in my friend's on-campus apartment, and I was figuring out what to do with my life. I was a music production major but going into the music industry just didn't seem appealing. So, I was praying before going to bed for the evening when I heard a still small voice lay on my heart the idea of go into ministry. At first, I was intimidated. Who was I to go into ministry? I was shy, depressed, and didn't have it all together. Yet that still small voice kept nudging me to go into ordained ministry. It is that still small voice that guided me through the twists and turns, heartache and success, and from one denomination to another in order to make me the priest I am today.

This morning, we heard Isaiah's call story, but his did not involve a still, small voice. His call came with a grand vision of the Lord upon his throne. Angels were flying around the Lord saying, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of your glory." The building shook and the house was filled with smoke. All this overwhelms Isaiah. He says, "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!" In this moment, Isaiah feels unworthy because of his sin and imperfections.

Yet, God does not condemn Isaiah. In fact, God uses this opportunity to offer forgiveness. In Isaiah's vision, and angel comes and touches Isaiah's lips with hot coal, blotting out his sins. God then offers and invitation. "Whom shall I send," the Lord says, "and who will go for us?" To this invitation, Isaiah boldly says, "Here I am, send me!" God invites an imperfect person to do God's prophetic work in the world.

How often do we put off a call because we think we are unworthy? We think we don't know enough, we sin too much, we can't handle it emotionally, and we fear condemnation and failure. The God revealed in Jesus, however, operates differently than we often assume. If we open ourselves up and acknowledge that we don't have it all together, then God will offer forgiveness and an invitation to say "here I am, send me!"

You don't have to be perfect to be invited to a calling from God.

The disciples Jesus called in our Gospel passage for today were far from perfect. Peter would constantly put his foot in his mouth and abandon Jesus when he needed him most. James and John thought of themselves as the greatest disciples and lacked humility. Jesus, however, looks at there heart and offers them an invitation to use their skills as fishermen in a new way. "From now on," Jesus says, "you will catch people rather than fish."

Think for a moment about your life and your walk with Jesus. What has God invited you to do that you pushed aside? What has God laid on your heart to pursue, but you feel unworthy to do so? We all have been invited to say, “Here I am, send me!” May we always be challenged to accept that invitation.