

Holy Trinity, May 30, 2021 (Jn 3:1-17; Ps 29; Rom 8:14-17; Is 6:1-8) **SERMON**

Isaiah was in trouble! He was in the presence of God—and everyone knew that no unrighteous person could be in God’s presence and live! God Almighty was the Creator of all things. He had delivered his chosen people from bondage in Egypt by overthrowing Pharaoh and his kingdom. And he demanded ritual cleanliness and purity!

This was the One God—a God so holy that to be *unclean* in his presence would bring certain death. And somehow Isaiah had gotten caught up into this graphic vision of the Lord, seated on a throne, so high and exalted that the mere hem of his robe filled the whole temple! The smoke that filled this house of God was the incense from the altar. The flying *seraphs* were part of the heavenly host whose business was to praise God. This temple was truly an *awesome* place!

No wonder Isaiah cried out in trembling despair! **“Woe is 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!”** Then one of the seraphs flew to him with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from the altar. With it he touched Isaiah’s mouth and said, **“See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for.”**

Poor Isaiah! Called up into a vision *of* God, *by* God, with no chance to purify himself by prayers and offerings. But God provided what was needed so Isaiah could be in his presence and respond to his call: **“Whom shall I send? Who will go for us?”** And Isaiah said, **“Here am I. Send me!”**

Here’s the *context* of this story of Isaiah. *Everyone* knew that God’s holiness didn’t tolerate uncleanness or imperfection. The religion of the Hebrew Bible was built around this fact. They had a complicated *Holiness Code* which instructed the people how to live safely with their holy God. When they sinned by breaking any of the commandments or laws, they needed a priest to make *atonement* for their sins. They needed a blood sacrifice. Without that intervention to remove their guilt, they would die.

On this Holy Trinity Sunday we celebrate God the Father who sent God the Son as the atoner and sacrifice to remove the guilt of all our sins.

God has ministered to *our* need as he did to Isaiah's. Instead of a live coal, he's touched our lips with the forgiving grace of bread and wine.

The same God who was so awesome and mighty that Isaiah *quaked* in his presence, stooped to become one of us, *to live among us*, to share our very humanness. The same God whose holiness threatened death to the unclean, died to give us his own body and blood, a living burning coal to touch our lips and cleanse our lives. Time after time when we've turned away from God, he's *called us back* through the Holy Spirit, inviting us to join in confession, in his Holy Supper. And time after time, *our guilt has departed and our sin has been blotted out*.

Our lips have been made clean—and we're called, as was Isaiah, to go and proclaim God's Word! Do you hear God's *call*? God's *question*? **"Whom shall I send?"**

How shall we answer? **"Here am I; send me!"**

Send me, Lord! Send me to proclaim and enact the peace and mercy of Christ wherever I go. Teach me again, Lord,

- to speak your truth in love,
- to withhold judgment and see only you, Lord, in all people in any kind of need,
- to uphold the rights of those who are weak or can't speak for themselves,
- to see beyond the temptations and values of a too-wordly culture,
- to perceive your creative touch in all things of nature
- to feed the hungry; give drink to the thirsty; offer refuge to the stranger and healing to the sick; to clothe the naked; and to visit those who are in prison.

"Here am I; send me!" Send me

- to stand for racial justice and confront racism;
- to care for all creation;
- to offer equal respect and honor to all people regardless of race, creed, orientation, identity, or status,
- to support equal opportunity and equal pay for all people in all situations.

Lord, we hear you calling to us, **"Whom shall I send?"** And we answer, **"Here we are; send us!"**