

Palm Harbor United Methodist Church
Dangerous Prayers: Send Me
Rev. Cathy Hart
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Isaiah 6:1-8

6 In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord, high and exalted, seated on a throne; and the train of his robe filled the temple. **2** Above him were seraphim, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. **3** And they were calling to one another:

“Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty;
the whole earth is full of his glory.”

4 At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke.

5 “Woe to me!” I cried. “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.”

6 Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. **7** With it he touched my mouth and said, “See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for.”

8 Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?”
And I said, “Here am I. Send me!”

Call stories

- Scripture shares many stories of call.
- Isaiah’s call
 - ***8** Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?” And I said, “Here am I. Send me!” (Isaiah 6:8)*
- Moses’ call
 - ***4** When the LORD saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush, “Moses! Moses!” And Moses said, “Here I am. (Exodus 3:4)*
- Abram’s call
 - ***22** Sometime later God tested Abraham. He said to him, “Abraham!” “Here I am,” he replied. (Genesis 22:1 sacrifice Isaac)*
 - ***11** But the angel of the LORD called out to him from heaven, “Abraham! Abraham” “Here I am,” he replied. (Genesis 22:11 saves Isaac)*
- Jacob’s call
 - *(Genesis 46:2) **2** And God spoke to Israel in a vision at night and said, “Jacob! Jacob!” “Here I am,” he replied. (Went to Egypt)*

Our prayer life is often filled with prayer requests for ourselves and others. We ask God to help us with decisions, with our struggles, with our health. We have prayer request cards in the pews; the prayer wall; and our prayer chain where we are able to pray for one another. These are important prayers and it is vital to the community of faith for us to be in prayer for one another. But the send me prayer is different.

“We pray about what we want God to do for us. What if we prayed more about what we could do for God?”

This is a very scary and dangerous prayer. Pray at your own risk! Or is it pray at your own spiritual growth! Don’t let the fear or the word “dangerous” scare you off. Dangerous prayers are an invitation into a deeper relationship with God. As Carl mentioned last week, some of the saddest people he knew

were those who accepted Jesus as their Savior, but not the Lord of their lives. We continue the struggle between flesh and spirit; our wills vs God's will. As we grow in our faith, we are more able to surrender our will to God's. There is such freedom and peace when we finally let go and surrender to God's will. And that is what this series of Dangerous Prayers is about. To help you take a step deeper into your faith.

Last week, Carl shared with us the prayer "Break Me." The sacrifice God desires is a broken spirit; a broken and repentant heart. A complete surrender of our will to God's will. Thy will be done. Today, is another dangerous prayer, Send me. If we surrender our will to God's will, we are then ready to follow him wherever he sends us.

Pastor Craig Groeschel wrote a book entitled Dangerous Prayers. In it, he calls this "Send Me" prayer a prayer of availability. We are ready to go wherever God needs us to go. That could mean moving to a different city, a different job, to stay where you are, even when you thought you should leave, to end a relationship, to say something to someone. Whatever it is, you are available. This is a prayer of calling. Throughout scripture, God calls people to move, to act, to speak on his behalf. Our story from Isaiah today is just one of many call stories. Moses, Abraham, Jacob, and Jonah all heard God's call and responded HERE I AM.

We sang the hymn "Here I Am Lord, is it I Lord. I have heard you calling in the night. I will go Lord, if you lead me, I will hold your people in my heart." This is my favorite hymn. Back in the 80's (oh so long ago) when the new hymnal came out, this hymn was in it and it quickly became very popular. As I was seeking God and praying a prayer of availability, this hymn kept coming into my heart and mind. I wanted to know where God needed me to go; to hold and care for God's people. And for years, as a teacher, I was doing just that. I truly believed that my classroom was my mission field. I was a witness to God's love to my students, my fellow teachers, my administrators, and parents.

God calls us all daily to follow Christ. That in all things, we should be glorifying Him. We can have multiple callings in our life; daily even. No matter how young or old we are, God calls us.

Our scripture this morning is the story of Isaiah's call. He has a vision where he is in the presence of God, along with the seraphim. He humbles himself and recognizes his unworthiness – he says "Woe to me! I am ruined! I have unclean lips!" And immediately, God sends the seraphim to touch Isaiah's lips with the hot coal to purify him. He is now ready to respond to God's call – Here I am. Send Me. In our life, we may not have such a powerful experience of God. But I have heard some of your stories and you definitely have experienced God's presence in your life. When you have that encounter, it changes your life. It is humbling and you become aware of your human frailties; knowing that without God, you can't do anything. But by his grace, you are forgiven your sins and given gifts that equip you to handle whatever task He may call you to.

When we hear God's call, there are different responses that we make and that we find in scripture. The first is HERE I AM. I'M NOT GOING. Think about Jonah. Jonah is called by God. However, when God gives him the job, to go preach repentance to the Ninevites, Jonah runs the other way. He has already passed judgment on them and wants to see them perish. So he basically said "I'm not going!" Think of a time in your life when maybe you felt a Holy Spirit nudge to do something. Maybe your response was "I'm too busy" or "I don't want to do that." I'm not going.

A second response is HERE I AM. SEND SOMEONE ELSE. Moses has the most pyrotechnic calling. God calls to Moses from a burning bush and Moses says "Here I am." God says to Moses *"So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt."* ¹¹But Moses said to God, *"Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?"* (Exodus 3:10-11) As the conversation continues, Moses makes excuses:

“Pardon your servant, Lord. I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor since you have spoken to your servant. I am slow of speech and tongue. He finally gets to the point and says to God: *“Pardon your servant, Lord. Please send someone else.* (Exodus 4:13). This makes me think of that 80/20 principle. 20% of the people do 80% of the work. We all at one time or another think, “Oh, someone else will do that.” To be perfectly honest with you, our 20% is tired. Many of them are getting older, having health issues, and just can’t do it anymore. Help is needed to keep the ministries we have here going. Please don’t wait for “someone else” to do it.

A third response is **HERE I AM. SEND ME.** This is what we see in our scripture reading this morning. Isaiah responds to God’s call with “send me” before he ever knows what the job is! This is a dangerous prayer. A prayer of surrender to God’s will and desire. That no matter what the task, you are ready, willing, and able. And if you go on reading in Isaiah 6, you see that the task was not an easy one:

*He said, “Go and tell this people: “Be ever hearing, but never understanding;
be ever seeing, but never perceiving.’*

*¹⁰ Make the heart of this people calloused;
make their ears dull
and close their eyes.[a]*

*Otherwise they might see with their eyes,
hear with their ears,
understand with their hearts,
and turn and be healed.” (Isaiah 6:9-10)*

Isaiah had a very difficult message to deliver. Yet he surrendered his fears and his will to God; he was ready to do whatever God needed him to do. **HERE I AM. SEND ME.** Are we ready for such a dangerous prayer?

I know that I have shared with you before that a friend introduced me to the Prayer of Jabez when I was seeking God’s will for me. That little prayer, that dangerous prayer, began to change my life. It is found in 1 Chronicles 4 and goes like this:

Oh, that You would bless me indeed, and enlarge my territory, that your hand would be with me, and that You would keep me from evil, that I may not cause pain! (1 Chronicles 4:9-10). Bruce Wilkenson wrote a little book explaining the power of this little prayer. And he states that the “enlarge my territory” is not about land or stuff or power. In today’s language, it might sound more like this: *O God and King, please expand my opportunities and my impact in such a way that I touch more lives for Your glory. Let me do more for You!* Be prepared for God to answer when you pray such a prayer.

John Wesley also had a very dangerous prayer of availability:

I am no longer my own, but yours.
Put me to what you will, place me with whom you will.
Put me to doing, put me to suffering.
Let me be put to work for you or set aside for you,
Praised for you or criticized for you.
Let me be full, let me be empty.
Let me have all things, let me have nothing.
I freely and fully surrender all things to your glory and service.
And now, O wonderful and holy God,
Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer,
you are mine, and I am yours.

So be it.

This is a powerful prayer of surrender. It is very much like Isaiah's response, "Here I am, send me." No matter what the task, no matter the cost, I am ready. I challenge you to add these 5 little words to your daily prayers. Here I am, send me.

Maybe this is a little too scary for you to pray. You might be thinking that God will tell you to sell everything you own and go to Africa. He might. But it is more likely that he will call you to be a missionary at your work, in your school, or in your neighborhood. He may call you to care for the people who are right in front of you. He may call you to stop and listen to someone who is hurting. Maybe it is in your family. Maybe there is a person who needs to hear your story or maybe God wants you to volunteer in a new area of ministry. We have many needs right here on Sunday mornings. Or just maybe, God is calling you to full time ministry. It is not always some big life altering thing. But little things become big things when we respond with Here I am, send me. Are you ready to say "Here am I. *Send me!*"

Let me share a story with you.

At one little church there was only one door in and out. At the end of church the pastor stood at the door. Everybody would have to walk by and shake the pastor's hand and say, "Good sermon Pastor. Good sermon. Good sermon Pastor. Good sermon." "That was amazing!"

The pastor stood at the door one day and this guy walked by in the line and said,

"Great sermon Pastor." He was very emotional and he said, "Pastor, what you need to understand is my life has been transformed. The answer is yes! Now, what's the question?" The pastor's like, "Thank you. God bless you, and next," and went on down, thinking "That was odd. That was weird." The next week the pastor preached again and the same guy comes up to him and says, "Pastor, Pastor, oh my gosh. God is so good. God is amazing. I just want you to know the answer is yes. Now, what's the question?" The pastor's like, "I don't know. I'll get back to you on that. Thank you. Have a great week." Third week comes by, the same guy gets up there and he's all emotional like, "Oh my gosh, I just can't believe I get to be here. Pastor, the answer is yes. Now, what's the question?" The line's long and the pastor's like, "I'll tell you what. Can we get together for coffee this week? We'll talk about the question." He was curious. So they're having coffee and the pastor's sitting down going, "What's this whole question/yes/answer thing?" The guy just got really emotional again. He said, "Pastor, what you need to understand is that I was really, really messed up." He went through the whole list. He was addicted, he was neglecting his wife, his kids were in really, really bad shape. He said, "I came to church one week." He said, "You preached on this message, and when you did it's like God just opened up my eyes. I saw it. I called on Jesus." He said, "I'm a new person. Everything's different. Everything's different. Nothing's the same. Ask my wife, she'll tell you. Ask my children, they'll tell you. Everybody. I am a different person because of Jesus." He says, "Pastor, what I need you to understand is this, the answer is yes. Whatever you need, 2am mow the yard, go visit somebody, pray for something, give to whatever. Pastor, God has so transformed my life, I am all in. The answer is yes. Now, what's the question?"

You might not be ready for such a dangerous prayer. Last week we prayed *Break Me*. So maybe you start there. But if you are ready to take a step in faith, I want to encourage you to say "Here I am. *Send Me?*" Say "Yes. Now what's the question?" I invite you during our closing song to pray one of these dangerous prayers. The altar is open or just pray from your seat. God needs you to do something. Seek his presence; surrender your will to his; and say here I am. Send me.