

“Remembering Who God Sent”
Sermon by Lisa Crismore
May 29, 2019 – John Knox Presbyterian Church

Isaiah 6:1-8

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lofty; and the hem of his robe filled the temple. Seraphs were in attendance above him; each had six wings: with two they covered their faces, and with two they covered their feet, and with two they flew. And one called to another and said:

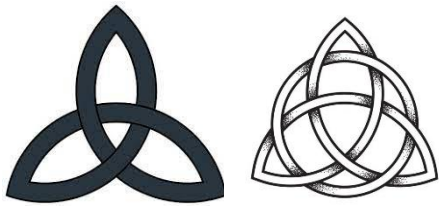
“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory.”

The pivots on the thresholds shook at the voices of those who called, and the house filled with smoke. And I said: “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!”

Then one of the seraphs flew to me, holding a live coal that had been taken from the altar with a pair of tongs. The seraph touched my mouth with it and said: “Now that this has touched your lips, your guilt has departed and your sin is blotted out.” Then I hear the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” And I said, “Here am I; send me!”

Today, we celebrate the Trinity. Our mysterious God comes in three forms as Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer. We hear Triune God and God – three in one.

Growing up, I always thought of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit as a pyramid with God, the Father at the top, then Jesus and then the Holy Spirit as if they ranked in importance. But as I got older, I learned that God is the same in whatever form God takes. We see the Celtic symbol for the Trinity, which is in our stain glass window.



I am a visual person so this symbol with the three interlocked is very helpful. I also have heard using water to explain the Trinity as water in nature takes on three forms – ice, liquid, and steam but in all three they are water. In the book, *The Shack*, the main character is taken to a place where he meets what his imagination interprets as the Trinity – God, the African American woman named Papa, Jesus, the Mideastern man

named Jesus and is portrayed as a carpenter, Holy Spirit, the Asian woman named Saraya who is portrayed as a gardener. All three of them have the nail markings in their hands as they all felt Jesus' crucifixion.

Frederick Buechner explains it like this:

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit mean that the mystery beyond us, the mystery among us, and the mystery within us are all the same mystery. Thus the Trinity is a way of saying something about us and the way we experience God.

The Trinity is also a way of saying something about God and the way he is within himself, i.e., God does not need the Creation in order to have something to love because within himself love happens. In other words, the love God is love not as a noun but as a verb. This verb is reflexive as well as transitive.

If the idea of God as both Three and One seems far-fetched and obfuscating (bewildering), look in the mirror someday.

There is (a) the interior life known only to yourself and those you choose to communicate it to (the Father). There is (b) the visible face which in some measure reflects that inner life (the Son). And there is (c) the invisible power you have in order to communicate that interior life in such a way that others do not merely know about it, but know it in the sense of its becoming part of who they

are (the Holy Spirit). Yet what you are looking at in the mirror is clearly and indivisibly the one and only You. (<https://www.frederickbuechner.com/quote-of-the-day/2017/6/15/trinity>)

All three of these are attempts at trying to capture the meaning of the Trinity. We try as we must as humans to make sense and yet, there is no way that we will ever understand the full mystery of God.

Then, it is no wonder that we find in our lectionary today the commissioning of the prophet Isaiah. This ordinary man, like you and me, has been summoned to stand in the presence of God. This image is as mysterious as one could imagine with God sitting on his high throne and God's glorious robe enveloping the room and pooling around Isaiah's feet. The six-winged Seraphs or angels, who have covered their faces and feet. They fly and swoop over Isaiah's head singing their praises to God in the most beautiful chorus, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts. The whole earth is full of his glory."

It is no doubt that God's image and identity cannot be revealed as the room is filled with smoke and Isaiah is standing in a haze. Through all this awe and wonder, Isaiah finds himself not worthy of being in this place. His words from his lips have been unclean, can we relate to this? It is not only him that is unclean or a sinner but all those who are associated with Isaiah are unclean and have sinned against God.

I find it interesting that in response to this confession, God does not condemn but sends the angels with a hot coal to clean the lips of the soon to be prophet making him prepared for the commissioning. Isaiah hears the assurance of pardon confirming that he is forgiven, "Your sins are blotted out!" Then comes the call, "Whom shall I send and who will go for us?" The words of God giving Isaiah the invitation to act on God's authority to be the prophet for God's people. Isaiah boldly answers, "Here am I! Send me!"

Hear and I! Send me! Who do you know has answered that call in their lives? I am sure we can look around the sanctuary or as we sit in our places online we can recall names of the faithful. Over the last two months, I have been honored to be a part of two commissioning for ordination. You all were invited to the ordination of our own Jillian Flynn. The other one was my liaison seminary student, LydiaGrace Espiritu Gray. She was ordained last Sunday on Pentecost. It has been a true blessing to watch both ladies grow in their faith as they met the challenges of seminary and the outside world and continued to discern the call from God. In the end, they professed their "Hear am I! Send me!" We also were moved emotionally as we celebrated the last 18 years of ministry of Frank Mansell on May 16. Our stories of faith could have been remarkably different if Frank had not answered the call, "Hear am I! Send me! And Alan Thames, who preached last Sunday, sharing his call story of resisting the call not really seeing what others saw in him but finally responding, "Hear am I! Send me!"

We are thankful to the Interim Pastor search committee who has answered this call by boldly saying, "Hear am I! Send me!" They are the ones who we question, "How long will it be?" "How is it going?" "How much longer?" It is no wonder we are a bit anxious. We miss Frank. We wonder what comes next. It is like the disciples looking up at the sky as Jesus ascended into heaven and wondering what do we do now? We don't know.

The five people on the search committee along with Pam Herman, who is Clerk of Session and makes six, are the ones who are filling out the Ministry Information Form that will be posted on the internet so pastors will be matched to it. They are the ones who will look through Personal Information Forms or resumes and see who looks good. They will have to interview and see who is right for us. We have blessed them in this call to do this work.

We pray fervently that the ears and mind of the Interim Pastor, who God is preparing right now. Only God knows this person. Perhaps, they are asking, "What comes next?" "Where will I go?" We hope they are willing to hear the voice of God ask, "Whom shall I send and who will go for us?" and they will be ready to respond, "Here am I! Send me!"

Can you think about a time in your life where you knew in your heart what God wanted you to do and you answered that call with a "Yes!" Or was it more of hearing God nudging you by others seeing gifts that you really didn't know you had and you said "Yes!" How did that feel when you served God and then reflected back on it?

This encounter with the Lord of hosts is a transformational experience for the prophet Isaiah. This call changes his life forever. It is a transformational experience for all of us as Christ's disciples. It continually shapes and molds our faith every time we reply, "Here am I! Send me!"

Who do you remember acting on their faith and speaking these words of service? We could spend hours telling and listening to stories of others who answered the call from God. Later during the prayers of the people, you will have a time to as we pause to openly (out loud) give the names of those who have spoken these words committing their life to serve.

Thanks be to God for the mysterious Triune God who comes into our lives and loves us, calls us, commissions us, transforms us. All we have to do is look in the mirror and see it. Amen.