

Rev. Timothy M. Crummitt

Fifth Sunday after Epiphany - Year C

101st Sunday of Pandemic - Online Worship Only

St. Paul's Lutheran Church

Isaiah 6:1-8

Psalm 138

I Corinthians 15:1-11

Luke 5:1-11

02/06/2022

Gospel

The Holy Gospel according to St. Luke:

1Once while Jesus was standing beside the lake of Gennesaret, and the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, 2he saw two boats there at the shore of the lake; the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. 3He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little way from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the crowds from the boat. 4When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch." 5Simon answered, "Master, we have worked all night long but have caught nothing. Yet if you say so, I will let down the nets." 6When they had done this, they caught so many fish that their nets were beginning to break. 7So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both boats, so that they began to sink. 8But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!" 9For he and all who were with him were amazed at the catch of fish that they had taken; 10and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon.

Then Jesus said to Simon, “Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people.”¹¹ When they had brought their boats to shore, they left everything and followed him.

The Gospel of Our Lord

Prayer

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen.

Excuses

Good morning! Last week I talked about how God has called each and every one of us to serve. Today, I want to talk about the ways we try to resist that call. But first I want to talk about something called “Imposter Syndrome.” According to Psychology Today, *“people with imposter syndrome believe that they are undeserving of their achievements and the high esteem in which they are... generally held. They feel that they aren’t as competent or intelligent as others might think — and that soon enough, people will discover the truth about them.”*¹ I would like to suggest that most Christians suffer from imposter syndrome.

You see, we are called by God, and instead of trusting in the literal Creator of the universe, we listen to that little voice in our head that tells us that we can’t do it. Our texts today raise the issue of the doubt we have both in ourselves, and the doubt we have in God. Let’s look at our first reading: *“¹In 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. ²Seraphs 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. ³And one called to another and said: “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the*

¹ <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/basics/imposter-syndrome>

whole earth is full of his glory.” 4The pivots on the thresholds shook at the voices of those who called, and the house filled with smoke. 5And 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!” 6Then one of the seraphs flew to me, holding a live coal that had been taken from the altar with a pair of tongs. 7The 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.” 8Then 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!”²

You can't help but be drawn in by the power of the vision that Isaiah is given. But I would like to point out one little detail; please notice what Isaiah says at the beginning of the text: *“5And I said: “Woe is me! I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips...”* Now, take a look at our Gospel again, and notice how Peter responds: *“8But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, ‘Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!’”* Are you noticing a pattern? Here's another. After a great deal of excuses, Moses gives this one to God: *“10But Moses said to the LORD, “O my LORD, I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor even now that you have spoken to your servant; but I am slow of speech and slow of tongue.”³* Time and time again in scripture we see the people of God trying to convince God that we are the wrong people for the job. And you want to know what's so powerful? Time and time again God tells us no, that we're the ones who are wrong, and that our flaws don't matter...

² Isaiah 6:1-8 NRSV

³ Exodus 4:10 NRSV

In a world where every little mistake or quirk is criticized and punished, it's refreshing to be reminded (by God no less!) that we're good enough as we are. Let's take a closer look at the Gospel lesson. I've shared this before, but it bears repeating. Every young Jewish boy would have grown up aspiring to become a religious leader. By the age of 12 they would have memorized the entire Torah, the first five books of the Bible. Those that were deemed gifted would have gone on to learn more, eventually working their way to the point where they would interview with different rabbi's, hopefully learning from them and eventually setting off on their own. Those that didn't make the cut at 12 would have gone on to learn the family trade. It is this group of people who Jesus encounters in our Gospel text.

While it's impossible to know, you can't help but get the feeling that Jesus chooses his first disciples because they are a part of the group in society who have been told over and over again that they aren't good enough. Scripture shows us that God often picks the outcast, and the same is true here. When Peter falls down on his knees and yells "*Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!*" you can't help but hear decades of voices that have told Peter that same exact thing...

And yet... does any of that matter to Jesus? No, instead he responds to Peter, saying "*do not be afraid.*" Do you know how many times as a pastor I have heard that same response that Peter gives? "Pastor, I'm just not smart enough to help with that", or "Pastor, I don't know enough about the Bible to serve the Church" and "Pastor, thank you for the offer, I just don't think I'm the best person for this job." It drives me crazy! Because we so often don't see what God and those around us already see! That we are indeed good enough. That we HAVE been chosen! That you are loved and

cherished, and that God will help you. You know how I know? Because I've been where you are... I've said what you said... and God didn't care. If God can lead me to this place, God can take us anywhere. Amen.