

BIBLE STUDY
February 4, 2019

The Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Isaiah 6: 1-2A, 3-8

1 Corinthians 15: 1-11

Luke 5: 1-11

1. Isaiah 6: 1-2A, 3-8

- The Call of Isaiah
- His credential to justify his speaking a unpopular message
- In the year king Uzziah died=742
- The Lord seated on a high and lofty throne: In the Holy of Holies there were two cherubim (angels) whose outstretched wings served as the throne of God
- The train of his garment filled the temple with God's glory
- The Ark of the Covenant was seen to be God's footstool
- Seraphim=angels/heavenly beings: guardians of the heavenly court; they covered their faces in respect
- They cried out: Holy, holy, holy=the complete otherness of God. His total transcendence.
- We sing this hymn of the seraphim at Mass at the beginning of the Eucharistic Prayer.
- The house shook and there was smoke: signs of the divine presence.
- The prophet's objection to his call: he is a sinner and unworthy. Every prophet objects to the call protesting that he/she is unworthy. Moses said he stuttered and could not speak to Pharaoh. Jeremiah said he was too young. Peter in the Gospel: Depart from me for I am a sinful man. God makes the prophet worthy.
- Woe is me; I am doomed/I am made silent; Doomed because no one could survive after they had seen God. Silent: the appropriate response to the glory of God.
- The prophet's lips are purified with a burning coal. His lips stand for his whole person.
- Dialogue between God and prophet: Whom shall I send? Send me!
- The desire of the prophet to serve
- There is an irony in the prophet's commissioning: the people will listen but not understand; look but not see; they will have sluggish hearts and dull ears; lest they see, hear, and understand
- There is a divine foreknowledge that people will not respond to the prophet's message. Not that God causes it but that he knows in advance that they will not listen.
- It will take a crisis for them to change.

2. Luke 5: 1-11

- Unlike Mark and Matthew, Luke has Jesus minister to the crowds alone before he calls disciples. The occasion of Jesus' meeting his first disciples is his preaching on the lakeshore with the crowd pressing in on him. He calls on fishermen who are mending their nets to use their boat as a pulpit. The boat belongs to Simon. At the time Luke wrote his Gospel a boat was an image of the church—tossed on the stormy waters of the world. Luke is giving us a symbolic image of the Church speaking the word of Jesus. Remember, the Gospel of Luke is volume 1 of his two part work. Acts is the second volume which is the story of the Church continuing on the work of Jesus, preaching his word to the ends of the earth.
- After his preaching, he tells Simon and the others to put their nets out for a catch. They protest that they have not caught anything all night and daytime is not a good time to fish. However, they do as he says. They catch an enormous number of fish so much that the nets are tearing and the boat is sinking.
- Simon realizes that God is present in Jesus. He falls to his knees and professes his unworthiness—just as Isaiah did in the presence of God.
- Jesus says, "Do not be afraid!" The traditional message of God when he makes himself known.
- You will be catching men (alive): Commission of Simon Peter, James and John. They will no longer be fishers of fish but fishers of men (alive)—to bring them to fuller life.
- Peter's call and commissioning is in the format of the call of a prophet.
- They left everything: Luke's theme of discipleship. One must detach self from material possessions in order to follow Jesus.

3. 1 Corinthians 15: 1-11

- This chapter of the letter could be an earlier composition by Paul inserted into this letter. Paul is addressing members of the Corinthian church who are expressing doubt about the resurrection of the body. The Greek culture around them would be more comfortable with the resurrection of the spirit/soul. It would be hard for them to see any spiritual value in the material body. Paul recalls the faith of the church in what is probably a creed.
- For I handed on to you=tradition: the belief of the church as found in scripture and lived out in community under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. It is the lived experience of the church.
- Christ died, was buried and was raised—according to the Scripture=Gospel that was preached. Paul wrote in 56 AD before the Gospels were written down. He is talking about oral tradition.
- He was seen by Cephas, the Twelve, 500 brothers, James, all apostles
- Lastly he was seen by Paul "abnormally"—a persecutor made apostle by the grace of God
- By the grace of God, I am what I am

They Thought They Weren't Qualified

Scripture Background

This information isn't meant to be read aloud, but as background for the leader. If helpful, share some of it in conversation with the group.

All three readings today contain "call stories." In both the Old and New Testaments, call stories often include an encounter between an otherwise unremarkable human and God or a messenger of God. The people usually react with surprise and sometimes fear when they realize who is addressing them. Then they protest that they aren't worthy to be messengers for God or followers of Christ. This is the experience of Isaiah, Paul, and Peter in the readings today, just as it was the experience of Moses, Jeremiah, Mary, and others in scripture.

Opening Prayer

Pray the following aloud together, beginning with the Sign of the Cross:

+ In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Good and Gracious God,
thank you for bringing us together to reflect on your Living Word.

Open our minds and our hearts so that we may hear
the message you have for us today.

We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Scripture Reading: Luke 5:1-11

Ask someone to read this passage aloud, then pause for a minute of silence.

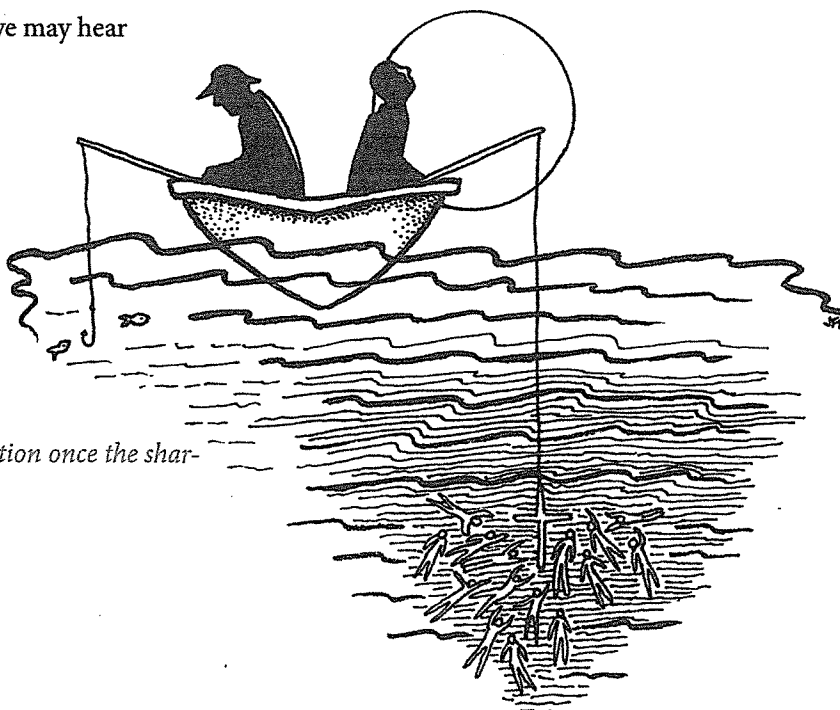
Ask: What struck you about this reading or the liturgy this week?

Allow for sharing. Move on to the next section once the sharing has died down.

February 10, 2019 • Year C

5th Sunday in Ordinary
Time

- ▶ Isaiah 6:1-2a, 3-8 - Call of Isaiah
- ▶ 1 Corinthians 15:1-11 - Christ's resurrection
- ▶ Luke 5:1-11 - Call of the first disciples



Reflections on the Reading

Invite each person in the circle to read one paragraph aloud:

It is still early in Jesus' public life when he stands preaching at the shore of the Lake of Gennesaret (a.k.a. Sea of Galilee) and draws such a big crowd that he climbs into Simon Peter's boat so the people can better see and hear him. We don't know what he was teaching them about, but they seemed transfixed by his words. We don't know what Peter and his companions were thinking when Jesus invited himself into their boat, but Peter is taken aback when Jesus tells him later to go fishing again after he already fished all night with no luck. Maybe there's something about the way that Jesus looks at him that makes Peter decide "Ok, if you say so..." The amazing catch of fish follows, and the realization hits Peter that Jesus is more than just a good speaker. Like Isaiah and Paul in the other readings today, Peter suddenly realizes he is in the presence of God, and he is "unworthy" by comparison.

Peter's reaction isn't unusual. The Bible includes stories of many people who were called by God to do a specific task or live a particular way. Usually, these people's first reactions are of fear, unworthiness, or protest that they weren't the right people for the tasks. We heard this in the first reading of Isaiah, and Paul mentioned it in the second reading today too.

Luckily for us, we get yet another example of God's response to fear with the encouragement "Do not be afraid." That is followed by the assurance that God can use *anyone* to do his good work in the world, no matter how unworthy we might think we are.

Questions for Discussion

Read each question aloud, one at a time, followed by time for sharing.

- ① Putting yourself in Peter's place, what would you have thought as you listened to Jesus speak and then invited himself into your boat?
- ② The Bible is full of examples of people who protest that they are too young, too old, not educated enough, etc. to be "called" by God? What reasons do you have for thinking you aren't worthy for Jesus to call you to do his work?
- ③ When have you experienced an "amazing catch of fish" that led you to greater trust in God's care for you?

Closing Prayer

Pray the following aloud together:

Lord, thank you for this chance to slow down and listen to your Good News.

May we go out from here committed to loving and serving all those we encounter this coming week. Amen.