

**Sunday 27th May Trinity Sunday Whom shall I send?
Isaiah 6:1-8 Romans 8:12-17 John 3:1-17**

Have the Isaiah reading in front of you...

In the year that King Uzziah died,

740 BC

Uzziah had become king at 16 and reigned for 52 years

Military genius and won great wars against the Philistines and others

He mostly did what was right in the ways of the Lord but then success became his downfall

He underestimated the greatness of God and was struck by leprosy (Read in 2 Chronicles 26:19)

He died at a crucial moment in Judah's history as the power of Assyria was spreading

Uzziah's son - Jotham succeeded him

Understandable doubt and anxiety about the future of the country spread and Isaiah went to the temple to worship

I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lofty; and the hem of his robe filled the temple.

Here I wish I was an artist!! Try to picture the scene in your mind

A throne, high up with the Lord seated on it a position that represents authority and superiority

A beautiful robe, the hem of which 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.

Seraphs or Seraphims attending the Lord

We don't know how many but this is the only time this word is mentioned

Hebrew for Seraphim means burning with fire / burning ones

Each Seraph has 6 wings, 2 covering their faces, 2 their feet and 2 with which to fly

They cover their faces and feet because although they are heavenly beings they are still imperfect in comparison to the Lord Almighty and so they cannot approach His pure and radiant glory

*And one called to another and said:
'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts;
the whole earth is full of his glory.'*

They are calling to one another in worship of the holy Lord

Holy Holy Holy

Repetition of the word adds emphasis

Holy is not enough

Holy Holy is not enough

Holy Holy Holy

This is THE HOLY LORD GOD ALMIGHTY

Some suggest that the 3x Holy is indicative of the triune God we worship, Father, Son and Holy Spirit

The pivots on the thresholds shook at the voices of those who called, and the house filled with smoke.

The voices of the Seraphs shake the pillars of the temple

These pillars had inscribed in them Hebrew names meaning stability and strength

Even these are shaken at the sound of their voices (See 1 Kings 7:15-22)

The temple being filled with smoke speaks of the presence of God. In the temple sacrifices would have been burned and incense lit

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!'

In this context of worship Isaiah is convicted of his uncleanness, of his sinfulness. He realises that Uzziah is not the real King of Judah and proclaims God as King and Lord of hosts. He has a fresh conviction of Judah's sinfulness as well and confesses his sin before the Lord.

Isaiah's encounter with God, in the temple where he went to worship, shatters his own self confidence and he falls before the Holy Holy Holy Lord confessing his unworthiness, especially in relation to his speech.

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.'

One of the seraphs then comes to him and touches his lips in a sign of God's forgiveness, an action that is prophetic, foretelling of the cleansing from sin that will become available through Jesus. Clean and pure lips were going to be vital in fulfilling the calling that Isaiah was about to receive from God.

After his encounter with God whilst worshipping in the temple, Isaiah was convicted afresh of God's awesome holiness, he was convicted of his sinful nature, confessed his sin and received forgiveness.

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 was then able to hear the call of the Lord 'Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?' and responded, offering himself to go and serve the Lord, convinced to tell his countrymen of what he had seen, of the awesomeness of God and wanting them to be made pure and holy.

If you read on through the rest of this chapter and the next you will see that the message that God sends Isaiah with is TOUGH but he goes and serves the Holy God whom he has encountered.

A little of my story

17 years ago this week I handed in my notice at school and applied to join the community at Lee Abbey. I went there tired and emotionally dry and I needed time to establish what God wanted me to do... teaching? or something else?

Whilst there a song we often sang was "I the Lord of sea and sky"

Each verse conveys words of God yearning for His people and each verse ends with the words 'Whom shall I send?'

And the chorus is 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.

Every time we sang that song, and it was quite often, I would pray those words as I sang them, often with tears in my eyes, asking God to lead me to where He wanted me to go.

LITTLE did I know then the journey that the following 15 years would take me on.

In a communion service - a place of worship like for Isaiah - a lovely, Godly member of community shared a word that he believed to be from God, that someone was being called in to full time.

ministry. I tried to ignore it but the burning in my heart was too strong and I went forward to received prayer

I still had no idea what this would mean

2005 I went off to Bible college for 2 years half thinking that I would go over seas to East Africa
God had other ideas

After 4 months in Kenya when I finished college, I went back to live at Mum & Dads. I did not have a job. I applied for various jobs as Christmas approached and NOTHING.

Had I heard it all wrong?

It is hard when God seems to be silent

But those words were still on my lips and most of the time in my heart!

I will go Lord where you lead me, I will hold your people in my heart.

To cut a long but amazing story short

After 4 months of no job I went to Bath to work as a Church Community Worker

By the way - during that 4 months of no work and living back home Mum was suddenly taken ill in the night and needed to be in hospital for 10 days and have a pace maker fitted. My Dad would have found it very difficult being there on his own with Mum in hospital but he didn't need to be because I was there. Coincidence? Or part of God's plan?

During the 6 years of serving on an amazing estate in Bath, God gave me a love for those people that I still hold in my heart.

He also lead me, somewhat reluctantly, studying for a Masters Degree, into being Ordained, into a different community to do my curacy, and then here to Owlsmoor to serve Him in this community

17 years ago when I handed my notice in from teaching, in that and the following 2 years when I sang that song and responded to God's words of 'Whom shall I send?' with "I will go Lord!" I had NO IDEA where God would lead me; to which places, to which people!

But He has and as I was driving back from Bath on Friday evening I was reminded in detail of all that He has done with me over the last 17 years; of how he has proved Himself faithful to me and to those who I have held close in my heart - over and over again.... too much to say here

It has not always been easy

There have been times when God has been silent and I have wondered

There have been times of challenge and times of excitement

And MANY times of blessing

God said to Isaiah, and I believe to all of us "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?"

Millions of people still need to know about the perfect love of God so they too can cry Abba Father
Millions of people still need to know about the saving grace of Jesus who was sent in to this world so that whoever believes in him may have eternal life

And there are millions of people who are still to experience the transforming power of the Holy Spirit in their lives

Are you willing to surrender all so that when He asks 'Whom shall I send?' you are willing to trust Him and respond 'Here I am; send me!'

It may be to your next door neighbour, or to a family member, it may be further afield or it may be overseas

But God is calling. How are we responding?