

*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. <sup>2</sup> 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. <sup>3</sup> And they were calling to one another:*

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

*<sup>4</sup> At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke.*

*<sup>5</sup> “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.”*

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

*<sup>8</sup> 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 6:1-8)*

### **Here Am I. Send Me.**

Looking back at the last 50 years or so, things had been looking good. It was a time of peace and prosperity, expansion and growth. The economy was booming, fields were harvested and livestock thrived. That is all about to change. It was the year that King Uzziah died. A symbol of power and stability, the foundation for half-a-century will no longer be with them. The people of Judah would never see this type of prosperity again.

It’s in this year of uncertainty and upheaval, the year King Uzziah died, that the prophet Isaiah sees him. He sits on a throne high and exalted so Isaiah must look up to see. The train of the robe of the one who sits on the throne fills the temple. I’m sure Isaiah was shuddering at the sight. King Uzziah in all his glory and splendor and might wouldn’t have been worthy to wipe the dust of this one’s sandals.

As he takes this all in Isaiah sees these burning creatures flying back and forth over and above the throne. These angels are the seraphim. Each has six wings: two cover his face. These creatures who strike terror in human beings so they fall and become like dead men, even they must cover their faces in this one’s presence. Two wings cover their feet out of respect for the one they serve. With the other two wings these burning angels fly back and forth calling to one and another, **“Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.”**

The Lord, the one true God, that’s who sits on the throne. Holy—superior in every way. Holy—perfect in everything he does without a fault in him. Holy—dependent on no one and nothing; completely independent of all. He is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, three

persons, one God—Holy, Holy, Holy. Isaiah’s not looking upon an old-bearded-wizened grandpa. He is the Lord Almighty—the Lord of armies! The whole world is full of his glory and cannot contain the infinite God.

As these seraphim cry out the doorposts and doorways shake and the temple fills with smoke. But we hear no begging for mercy. Who was Isaiah to ask for such a thing? There’s no rambling of excuses or finger-pointing of whose fault it might be. Isaiah knows better than that; he’s a dead man walking, so-to-speak. Isaiah cries out, **“Woe to me! I am ruined! 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.”** Isaiah knows what he has done. He knows who is. He knows the type of people among whom he lives. Instead of passing the blame to them he sees their mess splashes back on him. Woe to me. I am ruined. Every Israelite worth his salt knows that no one can look on the face of God and live!

Did you feel that way as you walked into church today? Did you consider whose presence you would be in as you got yourself ready for church (and I’m not talking about your brothers and sisters in Christ sitting next to you)? As you walked through those doors you didn’t enter into just another building, you came into God’s house where he promises to come to us. As you sit in those pews, you sit in the presence of the one whose glory fills the earth and then some. As you hear the Word spoken to you, do you recognize that this isn’t just another human being speaking to you? This is God’s Word filling your ears.

And what did you do? Like Isaiah, we confessed what we have done and what we have left undone. We confessed who we are. We confessed what we believe and know we deserve. I am a man of unclean lips that often tear down instead of build-up, lips that whine and complain instead of thanking and praising, lips that say the right thing but it’s only going through the motions, lips that stayed closed when I should have said something, lips that stayed open when they should have said nothing at all, lips that confess belief hiding a heart that doubts. Unclean lips that didn’t verbally speak out loud, but I spoke in my heart what I really thought about someone. Unclean lips that reveal it’s not just the bad things I do, but I am unclean by nature. Oh it’s not just us. Look at who we live among! You hear it as well as I do! But instead of taking blame away from you, their shame splashes back on us revealing how we choose to ignore or tell ourselves it’s not my place. Woe is me! I am ruined. It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God (Hebrews 10:31). For our God is a consuming fire (Hebrews 12:29).

Isaiah sees one of those burning seraphim fly towards him. He holds a live coal—think of the red-hot coals in a charcoal grill—in his hand. Using tongs he had taken it from the altar—the place where God’s people made sacrifices to pay for sins that would never be enough but pointed ahead to the once-and-for-all sacrifice God promised. The seraphim takes the coal and reaches out. **“This must be it! This is how it’s going to be!”** Isaiah must be thinking. But instead of turning Isaiah into a crispy burnt corpse, this messenger of the Lord touches Isaiah’s lips and says, **“See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for.”** That which should have condemned Isaiah is no longer here. The list of his failures and missing God’s will for his life has been wiped clean. His

debt is paid. It's been covered. The holiness that could not come from Isaiah has been given to him. That which made him unclean has been taken away. He now stands clean before the Lord and welcome in His presence.

As you came into the Lord's presence today, He did not burn you in holy fire as much as you and I deserved it. Instead, through a different messenger he said to you, "All your sins are forgiven in the name of the thrice-holy Lord, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit." God knew you could not approach him on your own, so he came to you, not as a burning angel, but God with meat on his bones and living blood in his veins. He comes not in power but humility and weakness being tempted in every way just as we are—yet was without sin. He comes to make a sacrifice for you, not on the burning altar of the temple but the altar of the cross. There the Lamb of God sacrifices himself for the sins of the world. Though your sins were red as scarlet, his blood that pours off that cross washes you clean so you are white as snow. As far as the east is from the west, your sins along with the damning guilt have been taken from you so that you stand with a clean conscience before God and He remembers them no more. From the altar of that cross this Jesus approaches you not with a living coal but with his living body and blood in the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper. He touches your lips and assures again: "Your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for. Go in peace, your sins are forgiven." That same Jesus has gone through the heavens to bring you into God's presence. He invites you to stand before God's throne with confidence where you will receive mercy and peace. And, yet, he comes to you in Word and Sacrament to give you mercy and peace. He invites you forward while he descends to you. He's returned to the Father ready to bring you with him to a place that he has prepared for you. Because Jesus lives, you also will live. Your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for; you have life because Jesus lives. And we will be with the Lord forever.

Until then the voice of the Lord says to you, "**Whom shall I send? Who will go for us?**" How quickly we seem to want to go back to our response before, "Woe is me! I am ruined! Who am I? Look at all that I have done! How could I ever go and speak about these things?" How quickly we might respond, "Here am I. Send him...he's more talented. Send her...she seems to have more of the right qualifications for the job. Here am I. Send anyone else who hasn't messed up as much as me. Someone else who isn't as busy as me. It's too hard for me. I'm just not that type of person."

The fact is, God could send angels to proclaim this Good News as he did in those fields outside of Bethlehem that first Christmas. He could again use a donkey like he did once in the Old Testament. Jesus said that he could make rocks sing out praises. I think about that as I hold two calls and working to decide do I want to stay here or do I want to go there? God could have chosen anyone; who am I? And, yet, in his good and perfect wisdom he's called me through a group of saints to serve them in the office of pastor. Who are Miss Sarah Dewey, Miss Nastya Bornschlegl, Mr. Ethan Doble? God called them through you to serve as His teachers in your church. Who are you? He has called you through His Word out of the darkness of sin and unbelief into his light and now he sends you out for him too.

Paul asks, **“How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?”** (Romans 10:14). He could have chosen anyone or anything and in his good and perfect wisdom he’s chosen you to share the Good News of forgiveness and life. Will you call God a liar?

At a recent conference the District President reported that there are over 140 pastoral vacancies in Wisconsin Synod. Since March 15, 2020 over 400 teachers have retired or resigned from our Lutheran Schools. The Harvest is plentiful and the workers are few. Encourage our students. Consider yourself. Is this a way for you to fulfill this calling?

Maybe you don’t see yourself having the gifts to speak like angels or preach like Paul. That may be true. But you are able to be like faithful Aaron holding up the prophet’s hands as you support, love, and pray for your called workers. You are able to support the ministry of our church and school with your prayers and the offerings you give. You are able to share that love of Jesus as you raise your children in the Lord and bring your grandchildren to him. You do go out and share this good news of forgiveness with your spouse. You are able to share this love as you serve your coworker, your employees, your friends while always being ready and looking for the opportunity to share the reason for the hope that you have.

You might still have your misgivings. There might still be some very real and present fear. As Jesus did for Peter he comes to you and says, “Do not be afraid. You have been chosen since before the creation of the world. You have been washed clean in Baptism. You are God’s child; he’s got you. I have made you qualified for this work. Don’t be afraid. It’s not your own Word that you are preaching. It’s God’s Word. You don’t have to save anyone. I already am their perfect Savior. But I want you to be part of this. I’m going to use your hands and your mouth to fish for people to bring into God’s kingdom. Don’t worry, I’ll do the real work—I know the exact lure and bait to catch them. You get to just share the Word and I promise it will never return without carrying out its purpose.”

So we hear the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send? Who will go for us?” And with Isaiah we say, “Here am I. Send me.” Amen.