

Homily – 9 Feb 25 – Ocean Shores UMC

[Isaiah 6:1-8, (9-13)]

Psalm 138

1 Corinthians 15:1-11

Luke 5:1-11

The New Testament readings each discuss a call from Jesus. The unread Old Testament reading from Isaiah presents a seraph (seraphim in the King James) who calls the prophet by touching his lips with a hot coal.

Many of the calls in the Jewish scripture are formal. Moses, Gideon, Samuel, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel were commissioned, as was Isaiah. Biblical scholars have found a niche for study by the forming prophetic call narratives into a genre, Commissioning into Service.

Jesus calls disciples in Matthew.

Matthew 28:18 And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

28:19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

28:20 and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.

The Commissioning applies to all as Paul proclaimed in Romans.

Romans 12:1 I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

12:2 Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Spirit acts upon us, but figuring out the will of God takes effort and may remain undefined. The feelings, physical or mental, turn toward discernment, but often remain fuzzy. Service to God with proceeds with variable levels of knowledge.

Calls to ministry are stronger. Simply put, the call to ministry is God's sovereign selection of individuals for full-time, vocational service.

John Wesley's spirit awakened at Aldersgate. He was depressed in 1738, writing "I could only cry out now, 'Lord, help thou my unbelief.'" Then, Wesley heard "I am to preach no more" at several churches in the days before what some writers call his conversion.

"I went very unwillingly to Aldersgate Street... I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation; and an assurance was given me that he had taken away *my* sins, even *mine*, and saved *me* from the law of sin and death." The next day, "the moment I awaked, 'Jesus, Master,'" was in my heart..." When Brother John found his route to the Way, he set off for respite in Germany.

Wesley's paralysis of unbelief was stronger than Isaiah's negativity. In the temple the prophet saw the Lord, high and mighty, his presence throughout the house of worship that fills with smoke.

Isaiah 6:5 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!"

God's displeasure with the people of Judah shows in His command to "make the mind of this people dull." The authorities interpret the negativity variously. Nonetheless, the Lord chooses Isaiah to lead, judge, and prophesize.

Isaiah 6:7 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."

6:8 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 lost, but found himself with the help of the Spirit to foretell the coming of Jesus and offer prophesy. The plan for Isaiah may have been fuzzy, but purpose was plain. The idea of purpose occurs frequently in Isaiah, since God has purpose for each of us.

Psalm 138:8 The LORD will fulfill his purpose for me;

Saul persecuted Christians before he found his reason for being as Paul.

Acts 9:1 Meanwhile Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest

9:3 Now as he was going along and approaching Damascus, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him.

9:4 He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?”

9:5 He asked, “Who are you, Lord?” The reply came, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.

9:6 But get up and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do.”

What he did was become *the* Apostle. Paul ministered in the early Churches from Jerusalem to Rome before composing letters to congregations. The Epistles set forth a theological framework providing guidance for lasted two millennia. By the twentieth century, some of his ideas, on women, for example, no longer fulfill God’s purpose (if they ever did).

Apostle Paul is both mighty, and humble.

1 Corinthians 15:1 Now I want you to understand, brothers and sisters, the good news that I proclaimed to you, which you in turn received, in which also you stand,

15:8 Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me.

15:9 For I am the least of the apostles, unfit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

15:10 But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me has not been in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I but the grace of God that is with me.

However, Paul’s hard work does barely compare to the perfection of he who worked hardest of all.

When Jesus calls the disciples to fish for people, the crowd was pressing to hear. Jesus had been attracting the multitudes and required assistance far beyond what was needed when he taught as a child. The recruits simply followed after the miracle of filling the nets when no fish had bitten the night before.

The Christ had only to say "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people."

Luke 5:11 When they had brought their boats to shore, they left everything and followed him.

The call of Peter implies that "fishing for people" means Jesus has caught Peter through a miracle. Christ appoints Peter also to catch. Although our Gospel reading does not specifically indicate that Jesus "called" Peter, the call is implied and impossible to escape. When the boats reached land, Peter and his fellows left everything and followed Jesus.

Today, spirit acts on everybody—with subtlety. When Spirit catches one of us, his or her feelings impel acts of love, prayer, penance, or any Christian action. Sometimes, Spirit's force is strong, and thought before acting is incidental. Sometimes, concentration is necessary, and on other occasions the force is weak or missed.

My take home lesson is Act Boldly, Do Not Be Afraid.

John 14:27 Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.

In the epistle reading Paul reminds his brothers in Christ in Corinth of the Word they received in which they Stand. The Apostle does not refer to Spirit, but I see the Holy Ghost nearby.

Spirit acts upon all of us in instigating will, and upon Christians by the call to consume time. The committed Christian devotes energy to service and energy in addition to love. Spirits operates on the receptive individual indirectly, but similarly to boss or spouse.

The demands of supervision and marriage are more direct, more certain, and have more power. One's response utilizes the same cognitive mental process to get things done, whether through praying, serving, or giving.

I wish I knew how to get in better sync with Spirit. Faith and prayer are basic to promote communication from the immaterial.

To sum up, Spirit has a starring role in today's lectionary selections.

When Isaiah is commissioned, Spirit engages in shock and awe with smoke and more. Isaiah takes up prophesy in the (normal) near impossible situation when king and subjects are hostile. At least he was not thrown in jail as was Jeremiah.

Spirit was present in force when Jesus called the first disciples from their work as fish fisherman. It *is* possible the miracle of the bursting nets

was enough to convince Simon Peter, James, and John to follow the Savior, but I assume that Spirit was at work on Jesus' recruits.

When Christ appears before Saul, I see his mind as reprogrammed by Spirit. Would that Spirit has comparable effects on each of us.