

The Fifth Sunday after Epiphany February 10, 2019

Our Savior's Way
Worshiping Sundays 8:00, 9:30, & 11:00 AM
Pastor Labuhn

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

In our Gospel reading for this morning, we heard the story of Jesus telling Peter to cast his net after Peter had spent the entire evening catching absolutely nothing. And in our Old Testament reading, we heard about Isaiah's vision in the throne room of God. At first glance, these two readings seem to have nothing in common with each other. Yet in both of these readings, it seems that Peter and Isaiah feel overwhelmed in the presence of God's almighty power, and in the end, their lives are changed forever.

Isaiah records his vision during the year that King Uzziah died, which historians would place to be about 740 B.C. He finds himself in the throne room of God Himself. There Isaiah sees the train of God's robe extending throughout the room, signifying the glory and power of God. Seraphim angels attend to Him and one calls out to the other, "***Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of Hosts; the whole earth is filled with His glory.***" As the voice of the Almighty began to speak, the very foundations of the thresholds began to shake and the whole house was filled with smoke. At the very least, this must've been intimidating.

Peter had a different experience. He was an experienced fisherman, who, along with others, including James and John - the sons of Zebedee, had spent the entire night fishing but didn't catch

anything. They were preparing for another night of fishing, when Jesus, who was teaching people along the shore, asked Peter to take him out in his boat a short distance from the shore so that more people might be able to hear what He had to say. Yet, while they were in the boat, He told Peter to cast his net into the water. Peter, who had heard and watched Jesus before, did as he was told and began to pull in a rather large catch of fish. So large in fact that Peter called for James and John to help. I'm sure that those who were watching were amazed at the catch and watched as both boats were filled with fish. Yet, when the boat became too heavy with fish, that it began to sink, Peter knew that this command and display of power by Jesus meant that he was in the presence of God.

Both Isaiah and Peter were amazed at what they saw, until the point when they comprehended the unlimited extent of the power of the Almighty in their presence. Isaiah and Peter react in similar ways. Isaiah said, ***“Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!”*** And Peter, falling down at Jesus' knees said, ***“Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.”*** Both became keenly aware of their sins. Yet, having confessed their sins to God, both received compassion and forgiveness, through which they received their God given calling. For Isaiah, one of the angels flew over and cleansed his lips so that he might be ready for his calling, and after realizing how overwhelmed Peter had become, Jesus said to him, ***“Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men.”***

When we come into God's presence, especially in our worship services, we ask God to be with us. As we reflect on who God is, in comparison to who we are, we can become intimidated and fearful because of the sins that we commit. We become overwhelmed at the thought of our sins in the presence of our all-knowing, ever present and all-powerful God. And just when you might think that all is lost by confessing our sins to Him, He gives to us forgiveness, love, and compassion. He does this for us

through the life, death, and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Because it's in Him that all our sins are forgiven, and through Him that we have new life. A new life leads us to new experiences, along different paths, and strengthens us by His Spirit to fulfill our God given calling.

This calling that we've been given is a high calling, yet one that has been witnessed to us not only by the likes of Isaiah, Peter, James, and John but by all the saints who have gone before us, who surround us and even those who are yet to bear witness. This calling is one that requires dedication to weather challenges, yet it's one where we experience revealed beauty beyond what we could imagine. And the Epiphany of our readings is that through God's presence, He is working to bring His Kingdom into our lives to the world around us. What a tremendous blessing that is to be His instruments in this world full of people who need His Word of love, compassion, and forgiveness in their lives.

We are blessed to be able to follow in the footsteps of so many saints, who have followed their Lord in creating relationships with others around them. We are also blessed to live in an area that doesn't quite understand what love, compassion, and true forgiveness means, or how to apply it in their lives. And we are blessed to have a very attractive building with which we provide the care that people need like our Open Arms, GriefShare, Financial Peace University, Stephen Ministry, and so much more. It has become a base of operations for many scouts and we are blessed when they donate hours to complete projects here at Our Savior's Way.

Yet, like Peter, Jesus calls each of us to be fishers of men. To form relationships with people that we meet, no matter where we might find ourselves so that they might experience Jesus together with us and they might come to understand the kind of love that God has for them as well. This is the basis of our mission here at Our Savior's Way. And why the staff, the Mission and Ministry Servant Leaders Group, and the Board of Governance all met yesterday to affirm and move forward in our Vision and Mission.

And Now is the time for us, not for us merely to talk about what we would like to do, but our challenge is to actually catch fish, fulfilling our mission as fishers of men. We do that by forming relationship, experiencing Jesus together, and by sharing God Love.

In Jesus Name. Amen.