

## How Are We Called Today?

**Isaiah 6:1-8 and Luke 5:1-11 | Fifth Sunday After Epiphany | February 9, 2025 | Pastor John Klawiter, preaching**

Grace and peace to you my friends in faith,

I was at Disney Land, waiting in line to ride Space Mountain. This thrill ride is known for being in the dark and this adds to the fear factor since you don't know where you are going as you build speed and travel through space.

Unexpectedly, while I waited in the building, the lights came on. The ride needed to undergo repairs.

Peering through the windows, I could see the ride. I could see how the whole thing was laid out. It was like peering behind the curtain—it took away a bit of the mystique and fear.

Now, the only thing to fear was... why did the ride have to get repaired???

Yet, perception was important—part of what made that ride so popular was the unknown. The darkness.

What does a young child do when they're afraid? They flip on the light. Shining a light on Space Mountain showed—it's just another rollercoaster, nothing here to be afraid of.

750 years before Jesus came along, the people of Israel would go to visit the temple of Jerusalem.

God called another prophet, Isaiah, and I'll tell you, it sounds a lot scarier than taking a ride on Space Mountain.

First of all, Isaiah is called into the Holy of Holies. This would be an intimidating place on its own. Now, add the terrifying vision that Isaiah encounters.

He actually sees the Lord sitting on the throne—or at least, he sees the hem of the LORD's robe as it fills the temple around him.

Then seraphs sing to him. If this is what we think sings Holy, Holy, Holy... we are mistaken.

## Sermon Transcript

Here's a few artist renderings of what's described—the seraphim, like a fiery snake. Or a 6 winged creature.

Isaiah recognizes his unworthiness. He protests that he has unclean lips—he swears too much or doesn't praise God like he knows he's supposed to. He knows that the people aren't much better.

They've all taken a turn. The LORD is not central in their lives.

But now, the LORD has his attention. Isaiah says “my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.”

One of these six-winged seraphs takes care of those unworthy lips by flying over with a coal from the sacrifice on the altar and cleans his lips.

Isaiah is made clean. Holy. He's ready to receive the mission. “Here am I, send me.”

Which is a beautiful ending, isn't it?

But that's not the end.

**<sup>9</sup> And he said, “Go and say to this people:**

**‘Keep listening, but do not comprehend;  
keep looking, but do not understand.’**

**<sup>10</sup> Make the mind of this people dull,  
and stop their ears,  
and shut their eyes,  
so that they may not look with their eyes  
and listen with their ears  
and comprehend with their minds  
and turn and be healed.”**

**<sup>11</sup> Then I said, “How long, O Lord?” And he said,**

**“Until cities lie waste  
without inhabitant,  
and houses without people,  
and the land is utterly desolate;  
<sup>12</sup> until the Lord sends everyone far away,  
and vast is the emptiness in the midst of the land.**

**<sup>13</sup> Even if a tenth part remain in it,  
it will be burned again,**

**like a terebinth or an oak  
whose stump remains standing  
when it is felled.”<sup>[c]</sup>**

**(The holy seed is its stump.)**

Professor Christopher Hays says “The Lord’s ensuing words are anything but reassuring. Indeed, the prognosis gets worse and worse: The prophet is called to tell the people to fail to understand, leading to the devastation of the whole land. This inversion may have been meant to emphasize the gravity of the message: Even with an eager and ideal prophet, the judgment will be severe.”

Total destruction. Everyone will be spread out. There is no hope.

Or is there? A holy seed is its stump..

Out of the despair, darkness, complete barrenness, God will flick the lights on.

It’s ok. There’s hope. You’ll see. Many point to this as Jesus.

But that’s almost 800 years ahead.

Fast forward to another call story. This time, of a gang of fisherman who have caught nothing. Yet Jesus tells them to put down their nets.

Despite pleading against this plan, Simon Peter reluctantly agrees. This time, there’s such an abundance of fish that they need the second boat to help them haul everything in AND to take the fish so they don’t sink.

What is Peter’s response when he recognizes that he’s in the presence of God?

Eerily similar to Isaiah’s.

“Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man.”

Jesus says, “Don’t be afraid, from now on you’ll catch people”—a fisher of men. Jesus, metaphorically, turns on the light.

His words of reassurance into the call to follow him are ones that resonate with us today.

What do I mean by that? We are all being called into this powerful opportunity to be fishers. We are being called to be prophets that serve the greater good—to preach a message of hope and restoration in our climate of self-preservation, self-idolatry, self-centeredness.

## Sermon Transcript

It's about more than us.

Simon Peter gets this. Do you wanna know how I know?

Peter has TWO boats full of fish—probably the wealthiest day he's ever had on the water.

Does he go and cash in? Sell all of his fish and make a huge profit? No. Simon Peter brings the boat to shore and then leaves everything to follow Christ.

How are you being called today? Throughout my life, God has called me in ways that have sent me around the world, have led me to building a family, and, specifically, God called me through others into ministry and through this church, God called me into Army chaplaincy.

Yet... God also calls me through writing to be prophetic and speak up when necessary. Speaking the truth to power isn't easy. If it was, everyone would already know and would be obedient to God.

What are we afraid of?

Like Isaiah, speaking the truth won't fix the problem. But he names it. And he sees the new thing that God is creating out of the old.

Maybe that's where we are. It might feel like we're in the dark, like we don't know where we're going. Like things that we once knew we must interpret with a new lens.

I invite you to push yourself. Embrace new spiritual disciplines. Do something for someone you don't know. Serve our neighbors at the March 6<sup>th</sup> Community Resource event.

Or maybe find your voice and speak up for someone who is beaten down, feeling hopeless, exhausted. Be present with them.

We find our hope in how we raise and nurture the next generations to come. What kind of church will these kids be witnesses to?

May Christ be illumined in their adventures through the stories they find in the Bible. Yes, there are the miracles—the catch of fish, the feeding of the 5,000.

But my hope, my prayer, is that they are guided by the stories in which Jesus cares for those most needy. For those shunned by society. For those deemed his enemy.



## Sermon Transcript

It's like Jesus turns on a light switch and we see the world for what it really is.  
We are called. Here I am, send your light, through me. Amen.