

5th SUNDAY after EPIPHANY

February 6, 2022

COLLECT: SET US FREE, O GOD, from the bondage of our sins, and give us the liberty of that abundant life which you have made known to us in your Son our Savior Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

THE LESSONS: First Lesson: Isaiah 6:1-8, (9-13)

Psalm: 138

Second Lesson: 1 Corinthians 15:1-11

Gospel: Luke 5:1-11

THE SERMON: Today's lessons deal with a calling into God's service. In the first lesson, the Old Testament from Isaiah is one of my favorite scriptures and is often used in the ordination of priests. The prophet Isaiah has a vision, he is in the presence of God. He sees him sitting on a throne with an angelic host in attendance to him.

There in the divine presence of God, Isaiah recognizes his human weakness and he cries out: "Woe is me! I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, yet I have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." Isaiah is saying he is unworthy to be in God's presence because he isn't living a righteous life nor are the people around him.

One of the heavenly host takes a hot coal from the altar and touches Isaiah's lips. He tells Isaiah he has been freed from his guilt and his sins

have been forgiven. Isaiah is given a chance for a new life. God has a plan for Isaiah.

Isaiah hears the voice of God saying, "Whom shall I send and who will go for us?" God wants someone to deal with those other people who have unclean lips and are being disobedient. This is the moment he has prepared Isaiah for. Isaiah speaks up and says, "Here I am send me." It is at this point that Isaiah is ordained by God to take his message into the world.

At my ordination, I felt I had given myself to do the works of God. I had accepted the command to go and serve the Lord. I knew that at that point my life had changed forever. No longer could I live a causal, carefree life. Now I would have to consider that I was a priest 24-7 and that I had to be careful of my behavior. I was now one of God's representative on earth. My ordination meant that I not only spoke the words of God in sermons, but that I also lived them to the best of my ability.

In 1 Corinthians Paul is speaking to the church at Corinth. He shares with them the time of his ordination, the time he was called. He said of all the apostles, he had never worked with, heard him preach nor seen Jesus. He admitted he had persecuted the church of God. His mission had been to shut down all that Jesus had built up and to stop his followers. For this he felt he was unworthy, unfit to be an apostle.

Yet it was Jesus himself who appeared to him while he was on his way to persecute the church in Damascus. Jesus changed his life and called him into service at that point. Jesus told him he had work for him to do.

Paul said he worked harder than the other apostles. He had to prove to them he had the call, that instead of being a persecutor, he was now a worker, a cheerleader for God.

Whenever people tell me they feel God is punishing them. I tell them the story of Paul's encounter with Jesus and how Paul was forgiven. I will then ask if they had done anything worse than Paul. Then I assure them that if God could forgive Paul, he could forgive them.

The Gospel for today tells of Jesus preaching from a boat in the Lake of Gennesaret also known as the Sea of Galilee. Jesus is speaking to the people from his pulpit on the lake. The crowd that had come out to hear him had gotten so large that Jesus had trouble being seen and heard by all of them. He saw two boats, one belonging to Simon Peter, and he got into it and told Peter to pull away from the shore and take him a distance into the lake. There he could still be heard as he preached. He could also see more of the people and not have them crowd around him.

When he was through preaching, he told Peter to throw his net into the water, to see if he would catch some fish. Now, Peter earned his living as a commercial fisherman. He knew the best time to fish was at night. He told Jesus he had been fishing all night and hadn't caught anything. But if Jesus said so, he would throw his nets into the water and fish again.

Peter was doubtful, he didn't think he would catch anything, but he knew Jesus had worked miracles so he would check him out and just do it.

When Peter tried to pull the nets in, they were so full of fish, he and his crew couldn't pull them in. So, he had to call to his fishing partners, James and John to come and help him get the catch in. The nets were so full of fish

that as they pulled them in, the boats sank deeper into the water, because of the weight. Thinking the boats would sink, Peter fearful that they could drown, fell at the feet of Jesus. He said, "Go away from me Lord for I am a sinful man."

Peter saw his good fortune, an overwhelming catch of fish, about to be replaced by the sinking of their boats and possibly drowning. Surely, he thought, this must be happening because I am a sinful man and this is my punishment.

Jesus assured Peter, that the boats wouldn't sink and the fishermen wouldn't drown, by telling him in the future he would be fishing for people.

The fishermen made it to shore and because of this personal experience, Peter, James, and John decided to become disciples or followers of Jesus. They gave up their fishing livelihood.

Now they would work with Jesus and fish for people. They would be a part of his ministry, share his works, learn from his teachings, and at the day of Pentecost, they too would receive the Holy Spirit.

It is from the conversion of the fishermen on the Sea of Galilee/Lake Gennesaret that we have the Christian Church.

We are all fishermen. It is our duty to share the knowledge of God with others. It is good to tell how Christ has been at work in our lives. It is good to try to get others to come to Christ.

In the post-communion prayer, found in the Book of Common Prayer, page 366, it states: "**Father send us out to do the work you have given**

us to do, to love and serve you.” This is your charge as an Episcopalian, as a Christian, go out into the world and fish. Bring others to Christ. Amen.

Re. Lionel Starkes 😊