

Isaiah 6:1-9*

Holiness CALLS: Holiness is all Around so...

The Rt. Rev. Dr. Bonnie A. Perry

February 6, 2022

I propose to show that God calls all of us to a point of prophecy. A point where we too say in words and deeds that this world is not as it should be. So that those hearing this sermon will begin to think of the places where we must say with our lives and our money I want and long for something different in life.

May the God who Creates....

Please be seated.

Good morning!

“Here I am Lord, send me.”

Can we, might we, dare we, be the ones who utter these words...?

How did it happen for the prophet Isaiah?

Some history:

in about 1000 BCE the kingdom of Israel is created and is united under the flawed but seriously impressive King David: A monarch and ruler the likes of which the people of Israel continue to yearn.

After David comes Solomon.

Although he is wise in some issues, he is less than adequate in managing building contracts. Yet he builds the temple, the amazing, beautiful, magnificent temple in Jerusalem, using forced labor and borrowed money. There develops in the kingdom a distinct separation between the rich and the poor.

Upon his death his sons quarrel, and the kingdom of Israel splits in two.

There is Israel, the Northern Kingdom, and Judah the Southern. Israel is bigger, wealthier and much more of a player on the world’s stage. Judah is small, compact, and off the beaten path in the hills. It’s one claim to fame is the city of Jerusalem and the magnificent temple, built during Solomon’s reign, located within its city walls.

Fast forward some 250 years—now it’s 742 BCE. We have a geopolitical landscape that is most certainly in the league of NATO, Russia, and Ukraine.

We are in the kingdom of Judah. Tiny. Frequently overlooked. The kingdom of Israel wants Judah to join in an alliance with them and Syria to ward off the aggressions of Assyria. Judah says no. Israel invades. Now Judah must decide, “Do we ask Assyria to protect us from Israel?”

This then is when the prophet Isaiah arises and continually says in multiple ways, “Trust only in God. Make no alliance with anyone. Trust in God alone.”

Of all the Hebrew Bible prophets, Isaiah is the dreaming poet. He is the one who walks into the court of the king and says refrain from that alliance, ignore that request. God and God alone is who we shall trust.

How does this come to be? How does a normal, well educated, upper-class man become an outspoken religious prophet? Listen hard—here are words to the wise. For once you hear God—well everything wrong gets a bit harder to ignore....

This is how it happens:

He is in the temple.

Offering prayers.

Seeking solace, inspiration and hope.

Doing perhaps what you and I are doing this very morning.

A bit of praying,

a bit of dreaming,

a bit of mind-wandering

in a sanctified space.

In the temple he looks up.

The hem of God's garment trails down from the throne

—gauzy- silk-shimmering in the billowing clouds of incense.

He has seen the Lord.

With his own eyes—he has seen the Lord.

He has seen the Lord and does what you or I or anyone of us would do—if we were to see our God.

He falls to the ground.

Hides his face.

Head bent down—eyes low—begins to say without even thinking

—Oh—I am an unclean man—

living in a sin filled world.

My thoughts are not holy

—my hopes more profane than profound.

He has seen the Lord

—the holy of holy

and he knows his ambitions are generated by the world—

that up until this point in his somewhat privileged learned life he has kept the sacred stashed in the corner—

pulling it out for some such solemn moments, when he feels like maybe it might be a good time to pray.

But now— the holy is all around it cannot be qualified or quantified, limited or corralled.

Holy is everywhere, he knows for he has seen.

And as he opens his eyes and looks up—a seraph—approaches— a holy messenger of God comes near—presses a coal against his lips—and declares what he already knows in his bones—

“your guilt is gone-your sins are forgiven”

The tears pour down his face—Carrying away the pain that is his no longer.

That’s when he hears the question—

from on high—

from all around—

for the sacred world

is no longer cordoned off—

shunted to the side—

He hears from inside

—outside—all around—

“Whom shall I send?

Who will Go?”

And he says,

pushing himself up off the ground,

“Here I am. Send me.”

For he has seen the Lord.

And the Holy is all around.

As it was then—

as it is now—as it shall be.

We are all called to the Holy

—for the Holy,

as theologian Eugene Peterson says,

“Is the most intense experience we ever get of sheer *life*—authentic, firsthand living, not life looked at and enjoyed from a distance.” (p 1199 *The Message*)

Peterson continues,

“The book of Isaiah is expansive...The impressive art of Isaiah involves taking the stuff of our ordinary and often disappointing human experience and showing us how it is the very stuff that God uses to create and save and give hope.”

(Pp1199-1200 *The Message*).

Says Peterson, “[God] uses everything and everybody as material for [God’s] his work, which is the remaking of the mess we have made of our lives.” Pp1199-1200.

For God, the Holy, is all around.

Have you heard yourself recently saying aloud or murmuring silently, “That’s not right.”
Have you heard yourself saying, “How can that be?”

I said this Thursday night as I read the news.

Really--- a candidate running for Governor of our state says in a campaign event in Livingston County, "If you suspect voter fraud, unplug the tabulation machine." Really?

And his colleague running for state senate in the same gathering continues in this vein saying:

"The ideal thing is to do this peacefully," he said "That's ideal. But the American people, at some point in time, if we can't change the tide, [which I believe we can], we need to be prepared to lock and load."

He later said, [in response to false accusations of voter fraud] "You asked what we can do. Show up armed."

My sources are a January 31st *Detroit News* article and a Fox 17 video from the same day.

[Video link to comment](#)

Is this what a campaign speech should be?

Is this the political landscape that we have come to tolerate?

Is the right to bear arms, going to be used to intimidate people who count our votes?

Is this what political discourse is becoming?

How can this be?

Friends, people of faith, can completely and utterly disagree in politics and a whole host of issues, but civil discourse is just that—civil.

God is calling us—just as God calls Isaiah—God is calling us flawed, frail people that we are—God is calling us to work for something more.

Let me repeat again what Biblical Theologian Eugene Peterson says,

“[God] uses everything and everybody as material for [God’s] his work, which is the remaking of the mess we have made of our lives.” Pp1199-1200.

God is calling us, now,

Because the Holy is all around.

Because the Holy is everywhere.

So we can no longer ignore our lives, overlook our world.

It calls us to look for more, yearn for more, and resist settling for less.

Holiness in our midst demands that we act, pay attention and carry on.

Tired by the relentlessness of this virus, yet still, Holiness calls us to act, to hope—to act with God. Knowing that by ourselves—we won't get very far—but with God—with each other then there is a chance.

So on this day in this temple, holiness abounds.

Holy, holy holy,

Whom shall I send?

Send me.

Maybe Lord—you could send me.

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.

Amen.