**Isaiah 6:1-13**

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lofty; and the hem of his robe filled the temple.

2 Seraphs were in attendance above him; each had six wings: with two they covered their faces, and with two they covered their feet, and with two they flew.

3 And one called to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory."

4 The pivots on the thresholds shook at the voices of those who called, and the house filled with smoke.

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!"

6 Then one of the seraphs flew to me, holding a live coal that had been taken from the altar with a pair of tongs.

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."

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!"

9 And he said, "Go and say to this people: 'Keep listening, but do not comprehend; keep looking, but do not understand.'

10 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."

11 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;

12 until the LORD sends everyone far away, and vast is the emptiness in the midst of the land.

13 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." The holy seed is its stump.

**Luke 5:1-11**

Once while Jesus was standing beside the lake of Gennesaret, and the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God,

2 he saw two boats there at the shore of the lake; the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets.

3 He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little way from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the crowds from the boat.

4 When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch."

5 Simon answered, "Master, we have worked all night long but have caught nothing. Yet if you say so, I will let down the nets."

6 When they had done this, they caught so many fish that their nets were beginning to break.

7 So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both boats, so that they began to sink.

8 But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!"

9 For he and all who were with him were amazed at the catch of fish that they had taken;

10 and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. Then Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people."

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

**Sermon In Awe, Unworthy, Willing**

I remember when I went home for my grandmother’s funeral, I was on the hotel bus to the airport. There was a guy on the bus, wearing a T-shirt say: “God is big enough”. I only noticed this when we were getting off and remember saying to him: “I wish we always remember that”, pointing to his shirt. He assured me that he does, leaving me speechless for a few moments. I continue to think about how many times I just don’t think about it, but about my own inadequacies, instead of God’s bigness, like when I wonder if really have the skills to make MATE truly alive again. I might be talking to myself today, about our feelings of unworthiness before the awe of God. Remembering that God calls us, not to do something that is overwhelming, as much as being in the midst of what he calls us to do – more than big enough.

Have you ever met God? Have you been exposed? Were you in his presence; I mean really in his presence? Annie Dillard, a famous writer, once wrote: “On the whole, I do not find Christians…, sufficiently sensible of conditions. Does anyone have the foggiest idea what sort of power we so blithely invoke?… The churches are children playing on the floor with their chemistry sets, mixing up a batch of TNT to kill a Sunday morning. It is madness to wear ladies’ straw hats and velvet hats to church; we should all be wearing crash helmets. Ushers should issue life preservers and signal flares; they should lash us to our pews. For the sleeping god may wake someday and take offense, or the waking god may draw us out to where we can never return.”

I guess that is exactly what Isaiah and Simon found out in today’s readings. When Jesus asks Simon to put out into the deep water his nets, he merely asks Simon to do what he knows how to do. Nothing more, nothing less. Simon is a fisherman. He knows how to cast nets, he knows the sea and the life within it. It is the work he has been equipped to do. So, when Jesus asks Simon to do his job, this time the result is left to Jesus.

It is when Simon hauls in such a great catch that the boats are threatened with sinking, that he falls downs at Jesus' knees. "Depart from me. I am a sinful man, O Lord!" he says. And Isaiah, when the foundation of the Temple shakes and fills with smoke at the sound of God's voice; and the seraphim fly around his head singing "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts,"; in response to God’s immense holiness, he cries, "Woe is me! I am lost! I am a man of unclean lips and I dwell in the midst of people with unclean lips." I guess, in some way, they both say, "I am unworthy!", and maybe even “God is more than big enough”. They catch a glimpse of the deepest reality: “The whole earth is full of God’s glory.”

What Simon lacks in this story is faith in himself, in his own capacities and worth, and in the very idea that God would use an ordinary person, a mere fisherman (and not a particularly good one at that, out all night with nothing to show for it!) to accomplish God’s purposes. And just like Isaiah, Simon is convinced he’s unclean in an unclean world, and unless some seraphim comes along and purifies him, he’d best withdraw in fear and trembling. The reaction is repentance; repentance of unbelief. He repents of his limited perspective…

And when Jesus hears Simon's confession - when God hears Isaiah's confession – he commissions them on the spot. "Leave your nets. You will be fishers of people." And then, "Whom shall I send? Who will go?" Mind you, these are not rhetorical questions. We must each give a definitive answer based on our willingness in spite of our unworthiness. It is Isaiah who has imagination enough to say, "Here am I. Send me. Send me as I am. Use me as unworthy as I am. I am willing." And Simon leaves behind everything and follows. How can you not, standing in the awe=inspiring presence of God?

Today’s readings invite us into a world of revelation and adventure, not unlike the invitations given by J. R. R. Tolkien’s *The Lord of the Rings*. Perhaps Christians expect too little from God and too little from themselves. While we can never fully fathom the nature of divine revelation, the experiences of Isaiah and Simon remind us that life-transforming inspiration may be right around the corner, in the next encounter, or in today’s worship. We can’t presume the nature or timing of such revelatory moments. God inspires awe, and then some…

We should never cease to wonder at Jesus’ choice of recruits.  He doesn’t draw from the supposedly best and brightest, say, from the priests or the scribes, or from political or military leaders, or from the wealthy elite.  Rather, he recruits ordinary folks near the bottom of the social hierarchy, working class or lower-middle class, we might say. He calls them, because if you are going to save the world through humility, gentleness, compassion, and sacrifice, it makes sense to begin with a bunch of fellows who couldn’t get much humbler if they tried!  And this basic fact - that God calls on questionable, ordinary folks like us - should continually open our minds to the question: To what is God recruiting us today?  For what mission can we say, with Isaiah, “Here am I; send me!”

How much of our lives and what we do are tied to our fear? To our feelings of unworthiness, or maybe hearing one too many times "You'll never amount to anything”, and internalizing it? So, imagine, what if Jesus, upon hearing Simon's confession, had said, "You are so right, Simon! What in the world am I thinking! You are a sinner. You will never do. You are no good to me. I will have to find someone else." Just think! There would be no Simon Peter, the rock, on whom the church is founded; no Simon who shows us over and over again that it is flawed individuals, those who boast of Christ and those who deny Christ - these are the individuals on whom Jesus depends to do his work in this world.

We have seen the world - intolerance, division, violence, and death. How can we even believe that what God calls us to is possible, unworthy as we are? We've march in the streets time and time again and yet injustice persists. We give and give and give, and the need never goes away. We worked all night long and our nets came up empty. It is not possible, but if you say the word we'll get back in the boat and go out again. We'll keep praying, teaching, serving, fishing for people, trusting you will call forth abundance in due time, bursting nets, overflowing cups, justice rolling down like water, baskets of food left over, and the grace extended to us not in vain.

How will we answer when God nudges us? Will we readily answer with some mock appeal to unworthiness? Will we continue to allow untruths to define us? Will we attempt to mask our contrariness that causes us to refuse? Or are we willing to engage in the Divine imagination? God is not interested in our unworthiness. God is big enough and only desires our willingness.

It all begins when Jesus comes to us in the middle of our lives, where we work, where we live, the seaside, the classroom, the hospital, the office, the kitchen, and asks us to trust him enough to do one strange little thing, like fishing in the deep water in broad daylight.  It’s the kind of thing that’s a little weird, a bit outside your usual routine.  But that’s often where Jesus’ call comes to us: where we least expect it.  Where we’ve failed.  Where we feel over our heads.  Where we feel uncomfortable.  Where we sense our own futility.  Jesus does not typically walk into our lives where we feel in control, where we are flush with our own success.  It’s in our places of vulnerability and confusion, failure and sin.  He likes to get us out there in the deep water in broad daylight where we feel a little silly and strange. And there, when we encounter God, we are immediately aware of God’s holiness.

With Jesus meeting us where we are, we have a wonderful opportunity to experience God’s grace. We do not have to be perfect for God to want to be in relationship with us. We just have to be willing to drop our own baggage around our fears and follow, like Peter, James, and John did when they brought their boats, overflowing with fish, to shore. Like Isaiah, when he experienced the true awesomeness of God in the temple.

Like Isaiah, like Simon Peter, and like all the others who go before us, we are called in the midst of our daily lives to serve in God’s mission for the world. We, too, are unworthy and yet abundantly blessed. We have firsthand experienced the greatness of God – Jesus, who was willing to die for us on a cross. Jesus, who showed us how to live. Jesus, who still performs miracles. So, cast your nets, write your papers, teach your students, balance the financial accounts, design the buildings, pour the concrete, organize yard sales and giveaways, lead the meetings, administer the IVs, answer the phones, sing the arias. Do what you know how to do, and Jesus will use it to draw others into the kingdom of God. God is big enough – be in awe, be humble, and be willing.