### Isaiah 6:1-13 New International Version (NIV)

**6**In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord, high and exalted, seated on a throne; and the train of his robe filled the temple. **2**Above him were seraphim, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. **3**And they were calling to one another:

“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty;  
    the whole earth is full of his glory.”

**4**At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke.

**5**“Woe to me!” I cried. “I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty.”

**6**Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. **7**With it he touched my mouth and said, “See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for.”

**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!”

**1 Corinthians 15:1-11**

15Now I would remind you, brothers and sisters, of the good news that I proclaimed to you, which you in turn received, in which also you stand, 2through which also you are being saved, if you hold firmly to the message that I proclaimed to you—unless you have come to believe in vain. 3For I handed on to you as of first importance what I in turn had received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, 4and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, 5and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. 6Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers and sisters at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died. 7Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. 8Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. 9For I am the least of the apostles, unfit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. 10But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me has not been in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them—though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me. 11Whether then it was I or they, so we proclaim and so you have come to believe.

### Luke 5:1-11 New International Version (NIV)

**5**One day as Jesus was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret,**[**[**a**](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+5:1-11#fen-NIV-25109a)**]** the people were crowding around him and listening to the word of God. **2**He saw at the water’s edge two boats, left there by the fishermen, who 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 from shore. Then he sat down and taught the people from the boat.

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

**5**Simon answered, “Master, we’ve worked hard all night and haven’t caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets.”

**6**When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began 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 full that they began to sink.

**8**When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus’ knees and said, “Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!” **9**For he and all his companions were astonished at the catch of fish they had taken, **10**and so were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, Simon’s partners.

Then Jesus said to Simon, “Don’t be afraid; from now on you will fish for people.” **11**So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him.

“Called, and Called Out”

The Rev. Lisa J. Durkee

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Let us pray: May the words of my mouth and the meditations of all our hearts be acceptable in your sight, Oh Lord, our rock and our redeemer. Amen.

I was a girl scout for only one year, and I have only around four clear memories of my time scouting. One includes a very silly rhyme—one that I didn’t want to be singing at the time, and that hangs in my memory these nearly forty years later. “You stole the cookie from the cookie jar. Who Me? Yeah, you. Couldn’t be. Then who? *You* stole the cookie . . .” and around the circle the line would go, with no one claiming credit for the theft. When I read this morning’s lessons for the first time, I have to admit that I found myself hearing this little ditty once again.

Can you imagine the little gathering: Isaiah, Saul, and Simon, because of course they weren’t yet Paul and Peter. Who me, Lord? Couldn’t be. Then who? And around and around the circle it would go, because of course they stumbled on the yes. Who would say yes to such a call? I know the feeling. Do you?

*Many* stories of those whom God calls to serve have similar beginnings. In one of the readings for last week that we did not touch on, the very young Jeremiah protests that he is unworthy. In this week’s lessons, we hear from Isaiah that he is unclean, also somehow unworthy of God’s call to him. Peter tells Jesus rather bluntly to go away, because he, Peter, is sinful. If God had listened to any one of these prophets and saints’ first response to God’s call, we probably wouldn’t be sitting here today. Who among us would feel worthy at God’s first calling, based on what *we* know of our abilities or God’s grace? Jeremiah, Isaiah, the disciples—each is called, and we can say also called *out from* what they had known, and they live into a greater purpose.  Maybe you are like me, in that I hear this story of Isaiah’s vision and have often gotten stuck in the other worldly nature of it; my 21st century mind leaps to question reality, where my heart desperately needs to hear the other truths in this tale: Isaiah’s sin is blotted out and he is the one whom Yahweh sends with a message for others who are unworthy. Centuries later, Peter is told that he will be catching people. Indeed, Peter becomes the rock of the church, which he founds in even more distant lands.

Call stories are both very encouraging to me, and also more than a little unnerving. In each story of call, we hear about lives that are turned around, and often turned upside down. Did you know that Moses, too, claimed that he is not worthy of the task to which God calls him? He told God that his stuttering would keep him from being the leader God needed. Again, God calls him anyway. You see, in each of these prophets and saints’ lives, God knows what we can’t say. They *are* worthy. Of course they’re worthy! *God* is calling them, after all. As God tells Moses, in not quite these words, “Don’t worry. I’ve got you covered. I will give you all that you need in order to do what I want you to do.” We can all hear the same message.

Jesus calls us, o’er the tumult. I love that line. Jesus calls us over the tumult of all the things that life throws to and at us. Jesus calls us in the middle of our daily lives, and challenges us to do and to be better. Jesus enters into the lives of fishermen who are frustrated with their lack of fish and shows them just how to have the haul of their lives. They learn about abundance in their very first interaction with Jesus, and then he tells them to leave that sense of security behind. And they do. They join with Jesus, becoming the disciples whom we turn to for our inspiration. They join Jesus, leaving behind the security they could see, but which was often unpredictable, in the faith and hope in what Jesus promised.

Do we do the same? Do we follow Jesus, trusting that what he has promised us is sure? Do we believe it when God tells us we are worthy, because God made us and loved us? I think for each of us, that kind of surety is sometimes a one step forward and two steps back affair, isn’t it? For most of us, our confidence comes and goes, and with it our energy to do. But as much as God has called us to follow Jesus, God also calls us out. Yes, God calls us out from our familiar places, but God also *calls us out* in another sense of the phrase. To be called out also means to be asked to defend a position one has taken. To be called out is to be asked to back yourself up, and in public, for a position you’ve taken that someone else knows to be false. And you know what? Jesus calls out his disciples from time to time. God calls *us* out from time to time.

What Isaiah, your lips are unclean? Let me fix that for you. What Jeremiah, you are too young? Then grow up and into what I already know you to be. What Peter, or Paul or Matthew the tax collector, or Lisa, or Bill or Ruth or Rick, or fill your name in the blank---you think you’re not worthy? *I make you worthy*, and Jesus lets you know that your sins are forgiven.

There is not a lot of fishing that can be done sitting on the banks of a river, when all of the fish are in the sea. There is not a lot of discipleship that can happen, if we don’t believe we have the gifts and graces on our own. No one of us does. But God gives us the words we need, the strength we lack, and through faith in Jesus, the surety that we will know abundant life. I would like to share a passage from Frederick Buechner that crossed my desk recently.

We find by losing. We hold fast by letting go. We become something new by ceasing to be something old… Out of each old self that dies some precious essence is preserved for the new self that is born; and within the child-self that is part of us all, there is perhaps nothing more precious than the fathomless capacity to trust. *(Frederick Buechner, 1926 - )*

Trusting is hard, isn’t it? We know as examples in our lives many who have broken trust or persons who generally distrust others. We know plenty of individuals whose regular words persecute rather than uplift. We may not liken ourselves to Saul before he met Jesus, but I’m sure that I know in myself ways in which I have yet to be molded. In the story of Saul’s conversion in the Book of Acts, we hear about a man struck down in the middle of the road and blinded so that he would be able to be transformed in ways that allowed him to see even more fully. When you and I find ourselves struggling to believe or resistant to the changes that would free us for greater good, maybe we can remember this story and find hope. Hear the end of the 9th chapter of Acts, beginning with verse 17: “**17**Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord—Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here—has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit." **18**Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized, **19**and after taking some food, he regained his strength.”

And after we symbolically take the food of the sacrament this morning, may we take strength in proclaiming the good news of Christ’s presence in our lives; and may we take strength to live as He would have us live—loving, in Truth and Grace.