

# *Straight from the "Hart"*

Worship Service from January 30, 2022



**Opening Prayer** Almighty God, you ask us to live according to your will. We have gathered to be set free from the powers of sin and temptation that hinder us from the abundant life you offer through Jesus Christ, and we ask that you accept these gifts as a sign of our commitment to live lives that please you. Amen.

## **Apostle's Creed**

## **Call to Worship**

Lay Reader: Come, let us worship together so that our thoughts may become focused, our hearts warmed, and that we may be filled with the grace to willingly and wholly answer his call to live out our salvation with renewed energy. Be awestruck by God's power and wonder. Rejoice in the glory of his presence. Be glad for what we can see, and marvel at what we cannot yet grasp. Be dazzled with his brightness. Rest in the shadow of his wings. He loves, protects, challenges, nurtures, strengthens and transforms us, that we can love and serve him in all that we are and do.

Pastor: We have come seeking sanctuary from the busy-ness of our lives. The hymnwriter assures us that whether we are living in comfortable or stormy days, Jesus still calls to us and gives us direction to follow just as he did when he called the disciples when he walked on this earth. Let's sing.

## **Music (vv 1,2,4,5) Jesus Calls Us**

God's calling to his people who are willing to follow him and call on him for help was not new with Jesus -- he has done it from the very beginning and will continue to help to the very end. Let's continue singing....

## **Music (vv 1,2,3,6) O God, Our Help in Ages Past**

## **Theme**

There is no question that God will always faithfully help his people -- but he doesn't force himself upon us, so the question is, will we faithfully seek and accept his help.

Once upon a time there lived a rich, powerful, intelligent king. His biggest problem was that he knew it. He didn't want to work or play with anyone he didn't consider worthy of his ability. And since he thought he was better than everyone else, that eliminated -- everyone. This was true even of his favorite pastime, chess. But the king wanted to play, and so he sent a message all through the land, (since this was before computers), stating that he would give a tenth of his fortune to anyone who could prove themselves as a worthy opponent. To discourage anyone from trying on a whim, he also added the penalty that if they failed to show themselves a worthy opponent (by beating him), they would be thrown into the dungeon.

Even so, many people, eager to gain that wealth, risked imprisonment to challenge the proud king, but none could match the king's skill and they soon had to build additional dungeons to hold all the people. The king was becoming convinced that there was no one in the land capable of giving him good competition.

Years passed.

Then, a humble man, ignoring many warnings, appeared at the palace prepared to play the king. His modest appearance fooled the proud king. "What make you think you deserve to be a worthy opponent against someone like myself, servant?" Irritated, he immediately sent for the jail master.

The man calmly answered the question. "That I can forgive you for what you are about to do -- would you be able to match that?"

The king was proud, but he was smart too, and he thought it through. If he imprisoned the man, the man would have shown himself to be a better person by his ability to forgive. And if he set the man free, he would have both his freedom and proved himself to be a worthy adversary. The king realized he had lost the match before a single piece on the chess board was moved. "You have managed to beat without playing", admitted the king, "because I play or not, everyone will see my dishonor."

The humble man replied, "But your majesty, everyone already knows how disgraceful and unjust you are -- judging others at your whim. You seem to be the only one who does not realize that it is not the people you jailed that are unworthy, but your own despicable, oppressive actions toward them simply because they could not beat you at an unimportant game."

Everyone feared what the king would react to this -- but as I said, the king was smart, and what he was blind to in the past was now obvious to him. He saw such wisdom and dignity in the humble man that without a word, he had them swap clothes and handed him the crown and declared him king. But he first gave this last order -- to free those he had imprisoned, and to imprison himself as punishment for his crimes.

The new king was indeed wise and just, and capable of forgiveness, and so a few years later, he set the old king free, and the old king used his sincere repentance, his great skill and intelligence to create some of most fair, just, and compassionate laws of the land. (Adapted from *The Unworthy King* by Pedro Pablo Sacristán)

Over the last couple weeks, we have been talking a little bit about Old Testament history, This week we are backing up even further in the Old Testament to before the Persian and Babylonian empires, and Assyria was only developing its empire in the distance. Uzziah, king of Judah, reigned for 52 years, and for the most part was a good and successful king -- expanding the kingdom and defenses for Jerusalem, building towers in the city and in the wilderness, and built towns near areas where they had expanded. He also built a strong, well-equipped military, and prospered in livestock and farming as well. His fame became widespread. But it went to his head and in his pride he did something wrong and the Lord humbled him, and as a consequence had to live in isolation for the rest of his reign while his son took care of the palace.

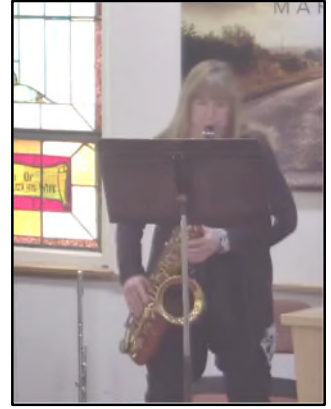
During these days, especially those last years, Isaiah was preaching about a need for God's people to get their spiritual act together, to humble themselves and to stop sinning in their arrogance -- to stop oppressing their own people for personal gain, and return to the wisdom of doing God's will. Now in a kingdom, as does the king so does the kingdom! And they've had a king for 52 years, so now there is a little bit of nervousness -- we get it every four years, but now after 52 years, this is a nerve-wracking time. So when Uzziah died after that 52 year reign, the official transition to his son created a tense crisis in the nation -- would the son (and therefore the people) follow God, or go a different direction? What was going to happen? It was then that Isaiah went to the Temple and God opened his eyes to show him who was *really* on the throne. He heard angels calling to each other "holy holy holy -- I like the way the Complete Jewish Bible captures the essence of those three-fold words -- "More holy than the holiest holiness is Adonai Tzva'ot (Zava-oat)" -- translated Lord of the Armies (Lord of angel armies, or Lord of

heavenly armies) or often more simply translated, Lord Almighty. So let's pause to hear that hymn on the instruments -- Holy, Holy, Holy...

### **Special Instrumental Music Holy, Holy, Holy**

### **Responsive Reading Isaiah 6:1-8**

Pastor: Now let's move into the massive temple with Isaiah, and hear what he heard and see what he saw...



(LR – Lay Reader, P – Pastor, **ALL** – Reader, Pastor + **Congregation**)

LR: In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord, high and exalted, sitting on a throne, and the train of his robe filled the temple.

P: [The highest order of angelic beings] hovered above him, calling to each other,

**ALL: “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty. The whole earth is full of his glory.”**

P: Their voices shook the foundations, the doorposts trembled, and the temple filled with smoke.

LR: “I am doomed, -- ruined. [In the light of his holy presence], every word I’ve ever spoken is tainted --

**ALL: “and we live among people whose words corrupt and desecrate. And now we’ve looked in the face of the king! We’ve seen the Lord of the angel armies.”**

P: Then one of the heavenly beings took a glowing coal from the altar with tongs and touched [Isaiah’s] mouth with it, saying, “You are forgiven, your guilt is removed, your sin is purged.”

LR: And then I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, “Whom shall I send? Who will go for us?”

**ALL: “Here, I am, send me.”**

### **Prayers**

And as we read forward from there we see I Isaiah is sent to speak to a people who, like our fictitious chess-playing king, has shut their eyes to their own actions,

and closed their ears to God's voice, and closed the doors of their hearts. So as we prepare our hearts for prayer, let's prayerfully sing that our hearts, eyes, ears, and mouth be open to see, listen, understand and speak... God's message of grace....

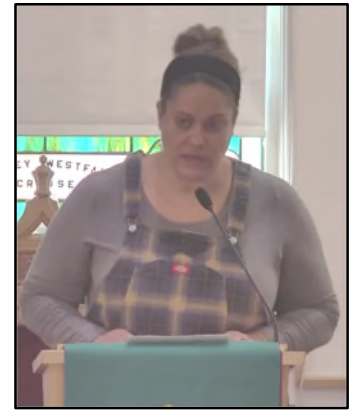
### **Prayer Music    Open My Eyes, That I May See**

**Pastor's** Loving God, we praise you with all our hearts in song, in prayer, in gratitude for your presence, your unfailing love, and steady faithfulness. You answer when we call to you and that gives us courage to face each day, whether we live in national, or personal crisis, or if life is good. May others join in our thankful gratitude for the opportunity to know and follow your ways, for you are a powerful, yet fair and compassionate God. Even though you are so highly exalted and lifted up, you are eager to pay close, compassionate attention to those who humble themselves and call on you. You preserve our lives during trouble. You protect us and save us, because your love endures forever. You created us and you do not abandon us, for we are the work of hands. **Praises and Petitions** And this is why we lift up these recent requests to you... \* We pray for lone Bennett's physical comfort and spiritual peace as she lives in the new place where she can get care in these days of her life. \* For Terri Priess' friend Sandy Talbot's cousin Jan Jepson, who passed away yesterday. \* for Jackson Pratt in the hospital who had surgery for a brain tumor, we pray a special touch on him and his family. \* We pray for the healing of Pat Coleman's brother-in-law Don Foreman \* For Michelle Matthee – who has cancer and MS, we lift her up, her family and her friends as they support her. \* We also pray for the family and friends of Jan Martin's brother's friend Roy McGaha passed away so we lift up his family and friends as they grieve his loss... \* We pray for peace and healing for the multiple losses in the Mary Jo Bell and Buchner families. \* For Jim Mallott home and feeling better, but we still lift up prayers for him that he may be completely better. \* and we also ask prayers for travel safety for Mike and Terri Priess as they drive for Florida this morning. For others too, Lord, that may have been mentioned a long time ago, or have never been mentioned to anyone – we just ask that you would undertake these needs that are unknown to us but known to you: Bring healing, hope, strength, direction, comfort, whatever the need may be – we know that you are a wonderful God who knows our hearts and our needs, and also knows our joys and celebrations and you celebrate with us for good things as well.

And now Lord, you have called prophets and disciples to live and speak for you. But as they did and as we do, we need to hear you, respond to you, and live for you as you taught us to pray, **Lord's Prayer**

### **Bible Reading Introduction**

Last week we heard that refugees returning home to Jerusalem were eager to hear and apply the Word of God. We also heard about Jesus' trip to his hometown where doubts about him began to arise. Yet throughout the region, most places were still eager to receive Jesus' dramatic healings and his authoritative, masterful teaching of God's Word.



One of those places is Simon's hometown, Capernaum (Kuh-PER-nay-uhm), one of the many fishing villages that populated the shores of the Sea of Galilee, a large, low-altitude, fresh-water lake surrounded by beautiful hills and mountains.

Jesus attracted a crowd when he went to the shore that morning. The people pressed around him eager to hear him teach the Word of God. Simon and his crew were cleaning their fishing nets beside their two boats. Jesus got into Simon's boat and asked him to push off a little from the shore, and from that natural amplification system, he finished teaching the people. Then he told Simon to go out to deeper water for a catch.

Simon and his business partners were already exhausted from just finishing and cleaning up the equipment after an unsuccessful night shift. This was their career, their field of expertise; and they knew that in this sea, fishing with nets during the dark of night was the best time to catch fish, and that fishing during the morning with the sun glistening off the surface of the water was usually a waste of time. But out of respect for Jesus, they humored him and did as he asked, probably expecting to catch nothing. We pick up the story as Jesus tells Simon to go fishing.

### **Bible Reading**

"Master," Simon replied, "we worked hard all last night and didn't catch a thing. But if you say so, I'll let the nets down again." And this time their nets were so full of fish they began to tear! A shout for help brought their partners in the other boat, and soon both boats were filled with fish and on the verge of sinking.

When Simon Peter realized what had happened, he fell to his knees before Jesus and said, “Oh, Lord, please leave me—I’m such a sinful man.” For he was awestruck by the number of fish they had caught, as were the others with him. His partners, James and John, the sons of Zebedee, were also amazed.

Jesus replied to Simon, “Don’t be afraid! From now on you’ll be fishing for people!” And as soon as they landed, they left everything and followed Jesus. Luke 5:5-11 (NLT)

As God assured and called Isaiah, and Jesus assured and called the disciples, we relive their stories and learn that he assures and calls us too. Let’s sing

**Music (vv 1,2,3) Lord, You Have Come to the Lakeshore**

Lord, You Have Come to the Lakeshore,  
looking neither for wealthy nor wise ones;  
you only ask me to follow humbly.

**Refrain**

O Lord, with your eyes you have searched me,  
and while smiling have spoken my name;  
now my boat’s left on the shoreline behind me;  
by our side I will seek other seas.

You, no so well my possessions;  
my boat carries no gold and no weapons;  
you will find there my nets and labor.

**Refrain**

You need my hands full of caring  
through my labors to give others rest,  
and constant love that keeps on loving.

**Refrain**

**Sermon Called to Catch His Glory**

Some scholars speculate that the similar stories in Matthew and Mark where Jesus call the fisherman were from an earlier visit to the shore. In those stories they also dropped their nets and everything and followed, but at that time it was not a permanent full-time change in profession, and it is this story in Luke when they left their fishing careers and changed the direction of their lives to become full time disciples. It is not critical whether that speculation is right or not -- but it is very

likely that Simon and his friends had at the very least heard about Jesus if not having actually encountered him previous to this morning when Jesus came to the shore, attracted a crowd, taught from the boat, and then showed Simon and his partners that their powerful and expert skills were no match for this humble rabbi. For Simon, this was a personal crisis moment where Jesus needed him to be “all in”. [Pause]

The story of most prophets begins with God’s personal call on their life, but like Simon, Isaiah is already acquainted with and in fact, has already been speaking for God. But now with the death of the king, and uncertainty about the nation’s future; God needed him to be “all in” for this national crisis. And so God ushers the prophet Isaiah into this heavenly vision we summarized earlier in the responsive reading.

Isaiah joins the very limited company of humans who see God and live.

**Divine power dominates the scene.**

The highest angels, humble and modest in God’s presence, boldly declare his perfect purity and his complete “otherness” (not like human or anything else in creation) he is different from everything else that is created, and yet everything that is created



is so great and grand that it reveals who he is, what he has done, and his mastery over everything. Then the massive Temple is shaken to its foundations, and the length of his robe’s train fills that place – do you remember how big the Temple was? If the train of that robe fills that Temple, it is a really big train. There were traditions in some of the Empires back in those days that when they conquered another kingdom, they would cut the train off of the defeated king’s robe and sown it to the robe of the victorious king, making their robe bigger, so the longer the train, the more powerful the king. It filled the temple, and the smoke filled the air (perhaps incense). And whether these things were literal or envisioned... it speaks to how God’s powerful presence dominates the scene.

Simon sees God in the human form of Jesus, which by design, is a much more survivable way to witness the divine. Yet with the catch of fish, the same message is being sent. Here is a person who has mastery over his creation. It was then that



the real impact of who Jesus was – was beginning to sink in. They wouldn't get the full implications on this day (they didn't even get the full implications until he went back into heaven and the Spirit came at Pentecost. But they were beginning to grasp that he was much more than just a powerful teaching, healing, traveling rabbi.

Before the fishing trip, Simon addresses him "Master", (meaning Teacher, Rabbi, or in our day, it would be: "Sir". Someone whose words are wise and respected and usually followed. After the catch -- after Jesus shows his power in their own area of life, Simon impulsively falls to his knees and calls Jesus "Lord", which in this context, the word means he is filled with reverential awe, knowing he is in the presence of someone special – the presence of God.

And like others who find themselves in the presence of divine holiness, Simon becomes very aware of his own shortcomings, spiritual and

**Divine presence highlights  
the danger of our darkness**

otherwise -- and utters a phrase similar to Job's near the end of his book after his encounter: "I heard about you", [Job says] "but now that I see you, I detest myself and repent..." (Job 42:5-6 emphasis added) and we already read Isaiah's response "Woe to me, I am doomed, the first phrase was connected with funerals and basically means "I'm a dead man." And the second phrase, technically means "silent" -- He wanted to join in the praise, but he realizes because of who he was, he couldn't. He wasn't worthy to join the praise of the angels, and so he could only be silent. It is like Isaiah is saying, "Though I have spoken for you, Lord, I now realize I am a man with unclean lips... because I have now seen God with my own eyes", (Isaiah 6:5) and these phrases reference the Old Testament belief that being in God's holy presence is, at best, a life-threatening place to be (Exodus 33:20, Deuteronomy 5:26).

Meanwhile, in Simon's version of this inability to be in God's presence, he asks

**But God's grace provides a solution**

Jesus to go away from him because he won't be able to live in the presence of a person like that. But Jesus doesn't go away. Instead, Jesus calms Peter with words that imply forgiveness and life, and he reassures in a way that a fisherman can be reassured, "Don't be afraid, I will make you a fisher of people." In current language, that would be "Simon, you don't need to feel spiritually lost or a failure, I can disciple you, I can teach you, I can lead you to live as a faithful follower and you will be as comfortable in that role as you are in your professional fishing role now."

For Isaiah, it is an angel that addresses Isaiah's sin problem by touching his lips with a coal from the altar -- thus providing the sacrifice and cleansing needed to be in God's presence and live.

And now safe to speak, Isaiah hears the question asked -- "Who will fulfill this mission for us?" Words in the Old

**God calls for followers**

Testament that are often answered only by an angel or spirit of the heavenly court, but here, they are heard and answered by the prophet. And Peter too, hears the same question implied in Jesus' statement about what he can do for him -- "I'll make you a fisher of people". It is not a question, but it is a question, because it implies a choice that Peter has to make that day.

This is the tipping point that moved Simon's faith from a casual and occasional acquaintance with Jesus to building his life around a new priority. The humongous catch revealed who Jesus was, but it also had a practical side effect. It abundantly provided for their families so the men could feel freer to change vocations and begin to follow Jesus full time.

Simon and company offer themselves through actions -- they left their nets to follow, while the prophet offers himself

**The call is accepted**

with words -- "I'm here, send me". And the specific call of the fishing company and the call of the prophet differ, at least at first. For Simon's new full time job is much more palatable -- Simon would become part of a troupe with Jesus, is going to catch a lot of people who would be healed, who would follow, who would hang on Jesus' every word; whereas the prophet is told he might as well be preaching to a wall in an empty room... (like I feel sometimes 😊). He is to go and tell the people -- actually it is the continuing tense -- he is to keep on going and keep on telling the covenant people -- already knowing that their hearts are hard, their ears are closed, and their eyes are shut -- and the repeated message would do little more than increase their resistance to God -- and the consequences of that that were sure to follow.

But the heart of the message is that people have been given every opportunity to see and to hear God's message -- to

**The message**

understand their sinfulness (like Isaiah and Simon did) which would hopefully cause most people to wake up, to repent, to change, to be healed and transformed and to start a new direction (like Isaiah and Simon did). But the majority of the people in Isaiah's day had so calloused their hearts and were so engrained in their evil patterns that the message was more a warning of future consequences than it

was a call to return, for like the chess playing king, they just couldn't see it in themselves. But there is a call to return and in spite of the eager early response to Jesus' message of God's kingdom being at hand, in the end the politics of church and state combined to deafen the ears and hearts of enough people to crucify Jesus and make eventual martyrs of almost all the original twelve disciples.

We live in a much different context than Isaiah who saw empires rising and breathing down their necks, or in times of Jesus who lived in world dominated by a Rome that had by that point become corrupt and overbearing, often killing people and their families at their slightest whim. Therefore, we may wonder, "What does all this mean for us in our context, who have the benefit of hindsight of all that history, who have these stories that are meant to reveal and to teach us? Perhaps the overarching application is "how do we respond to God's presence and message? More specifically, let's apply these events by asking some questions.

**Number 1) What is our attitude when we enter God's presence?** Whether it was Simon's shocked humility at God's abundant provision, or Isaiah's troubled soul over a national crisis and potentially dark future, both of them experienced a combination of awe-filled reverence and a keen awareness of their own human limitations. In our devotional life, in our prayer life, in our worship life, in our life in general -- how do we approach God as we enter each day?

**Number 2) Do we allow God to deal with our failings?** Confession of who we are and what we've done is a start. Accepting his forgiveness and a willingness to let him reassure us that whatever is in our past can be a thing of the past, and that it is not too late to let him transform and adjust our lives. We know this because we are deeply loved and God's covenant commitment to us offered through Christ does not go away. The fact that we are here in this room or watching online or reading this script means we haven't hardened our hearts. And I believe that most of us aren't even close to that, but are at least seeking to have soft, flexible hearts, eagerly desiring to do what God wants us to do for him. That is one of those questions that isn't in question form – but it is a choice we make, and it is a choice we make every day, isn't it?

**Number 3) Are we open to an ongoing shaping of our lives?** These encounters of Isaiah and Simon were not the first, nor the last special events in those two men's lives. God prepared them for this critical point and continued to work, and shape, and build their lives after that point. Will we allow God to encourage and teach and shape us as a continuing process - and know that he

can make us as comfortable in our new adventurous life in the Christian way as we had been comfortable in our old familiar patterns? Are we willing to let God shape us day by day – for a new day, for a new situation?

**Number 4) Are we willing to make ourselves available for God's mission?** Isaiah said, "Here I am, send me". Simon left everything - changed careers and followed. I can't say specifically what God's mission might be for you or for us. I suspect his mission, his call, will be based on the gifts and graces with which he is shaping and equipping us -- and/or the needs within your circles of influence – that is, those people you encounter on a regular basis at home, school, work, recreation, social life or any other routines you may have) Or to put it simply: Are you willing to do what God is making you good at -- to meet the needs you see in those around you?

**Number 5) Are we willing to reorient our lives and make God central?** For Isaiah, it was a continuation of what he was already doing, just nuanced a little. For Simon, it was a complete overhaul of his life's direction. For both, it required an "all-in" commitment. All God wants of you is all of you. And in heeding (listening and following through) with his daily call and direction, we will find peace-- even in those dark days when people do not respond like we might hope they would respond. And in God's time, we may experience more joy and fulfillment than any other avenue of life that we try -- for God knows what it is that makes us the best us we can be, and we will feel best about ourselves when we are doing our best at what we are best at. Right? Five simple questions. Let's pray.

**Prayer** Heavenly Father, even in restless days, perhaps especially during restless days, your call comes to us. It seems our lives are always busy, scrambling from one thing to the next -- so caught up in our agendas that we fail to stop and see what is going on around us and how we can participate in your mission and message. Reshape our hearts that we may more easily catch on -- to grasp your glory all around us. Let us hear you over the cares that weigh us down and the pleasures that pursue us to distraction and learn to love you all the more, to accept ourselves under your acceptance of us, and be willing to be sent out to serve you through serving others and bring glory to your holy name, and it is in Jesus' name that we pray this. Amen.

**Music (R2, v 1, R1) Sent Out in Jesus' Name**

Sent out in Jesus' name, our hands are ready now  
to make the earth the place in which the kingdom comes.

(Repeat)

The angels cannot change a world of hurt and pain  
into a world of love of justice and of peace.

The task is ours to do, to set it really free.

O help us to obey and carry out your will.

Sent out in Jesus' name, our hands are ready now  
to make the earth the place in which the kingdom comes.

**Blessing** Now as you go, be strengthened, comforted, and inspired to live lives worthy of God, who calls you [in all of his glory] and covenants with you [and sends you] to participate in his kingdom and family. Amen.