



Near and Now

When I Don't Think I Have What It Takes To Live Into My Calling – Isaiah
By Rev. Evan McVann

Warm-up Question

Have you ever felt unworthy to be called by God?



Photo by Samuel Martins on [Unsplash](#)

Discussion Questions

1. What do you see in this image?
2. What do you feel looking at this image?
3. What stories from your own life does this image bring to mind?
4. What stories of the world does this image bring to mind?

Woe is Me!

Read [Isaiah 6:1-8](#)

Bible Story Reflection

Isaiah has seen the King, the Lord of Hosts! In our scripture passage, we read Isaiah's call to be a prophet from his own perspective. He has this great vision in the Temple where he sees God. Yet to Isaiah, this moment is not filled with the joy of the presence of God, but overwhelming fear. Isaiah is well aware that seeing God face to face risks his own life. The holiness of God, contrasted with his own unholiness, is dangerous. Even the angels who surround the throne, called Seraphs, understand to cover their eyes! They sing to each other the very nature of God, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts!"

It appears that Isaiah has not been given the chance to cover his own eyes before God. Unprepared for such an encounter, Isaiah is overcome by his own unworthiness and the unworthiness of his own people, the nation of Israel. He feels condemned, and yet God does not condemn him. He feels unworthy to speak due to unclean lips, and yet God gives him holy lips from the coal off the holy altar. God gives Isaiah the ritual encouragement to be able to answer the question God has for him: "Whom shall I send?"

When we feel unworthy, it takes the words and encouragement of others to uplift us. When burdened by the guilt of hurting a friend, we look for their words of forgiveness. When plagued by the fear of not being enough, we cherish the affirmation of trusted colleagues. When confronted with our own sin and separation from God, we look to Jesus, who, like the coal from the altar, blots out our sin. Then transforming us into a new creation, Jesus sends us out to join him in the work of blessing all creation with God's holiness.

Discussion Questions

1. Isaiah writes his vision of God by describing his senses: what he saw, physically felt, heard, and potentially smelled. What part of Isaiah's vision captured your imagination and why?
2. In what ways do you identify with Isaiah's call story?
3. Have you ever felt the presence of God as a joyful experience? Describe it.
4. Have you ever felt the presence of God as a fearful experience? Describe it.
5. In the scripture passage we hear that God is holy. How do you define the word *Holy*? What example comes to mind?
6. What parts of yourself do you see as holy?
7. What parts of yourself do you feel as unholy? How might God be transforming you?
8. In the passage, Isaiah went from feeling unworthy to accepting God's call to be a prophet. What do you think changed in Isaiah's heart?
9. Was there a time when you experienced a change of heart? What was it?

Activity Suggestions

With a partner or in a group, take turns listening to each other's call stories. When did you first feel called by God? What emotions does your story invoke in you?

Think about your own calling and where you feel insecure or unworthy. Cut a circular shape out of paper to represent a coal from God's holy altar, preferably using black construction paper. With a white crayon or colored pencil (or any color that shows well on your paper "coal") prayerfully write down words of encouragement as if Godself was empowering you to respond to God's call today.

In Baptism, Martin Luther taught that we are made holy before God by the Holy Spirit with the water and God's Word. No matter how unworthy we may feel, in baptism we are reminded we are God's children, worthy of all good things God has in store. With a group or partner, bless each other by making the sign of the cross on their hands or forehead with a bowl of water. Say over each other words of God's grace.

Prayer Concerns

Those burdened with shame, struggling with depression and thoughts of unworthiness, and those who have yet to know the grace of forgiveness in their lives.

Closing Prayer

When I am uncertain about my call, O God, point me again to my Baptism and fill me with trust in you. In the name of +Jesus, Amen.

