

Ps 29; Is 6:1-8; Ro 8:12-17; Jn 3:1-17
Trinity Sunday – 1st Sun after Pentecost
Justified, Purified, Sanctified

Your Memorial Day angel facts: The Archangels are Gabriel and Michael. The Garden of Eden is guarded by cherubim. The seraphim are fiery angels with three sets of wings. If an angel is less than 90° it's a cute angel. (jokebuddha.com)

We meet up with the prophet Isaiah at an important time in the nation's history. King Uzziah who has ruled Judah for fifty-two years, is dead. Young Isaiah has never known another ruler. This is a sign-post for the prophet to remember the year God called to him while he was worshiping in the temple in Jerusalem. Uzziah's reign covers the first half of the 8th c BCE, and it was twenty-odd years after his death that the Israelite kingdom fell to the Assyrians.

There are times when the sense of God's presence in the worship service is very real – magnificent – and even overwhelming. I don't remember in detail what the preacher spoke about, nor all the Scriptures and songs that were included at those times – but I do remember that

God had a message just for me. It is never God's intention to condemn us. Rather, God orchestrates sights, sounds and feelings that bring His dear child (that's you) to the threshold of heaven. God reveals God's self as He chooses. God deals with you and me by revealing His holiness and glory. It is there that we bow down and exclaim, "Woe is me, for I am undone."

First of all, God always meets us in our context – the historic moment – the crucial time in our own life, relationships, occupation, needs. So it is that Isaiah remembers what year it was when God began to deal with him in his calling – his vocation to the office of prophet. The manifestation of God's presence is overwhelming in Isaiah's moment of personal calling: a vision of the Almighty – His robe filling the space of the temple – His throne and the attending seraphim (fiery angels with three sets of wings) singing a heavenly hymn to God – smoke billowing up and filling the sanctuary. Awesome and frightening and holy.

It may be that you have never had such an experience while you were worshiping in church.

Perhaps you would really rather not have such a thing happen to you. Before this immense upheaval there was silence in God's house. And when the vision was over, there was again silence. Sometimes a person chosen by the Lord experiences a quiet call and even a silent call. God comes to each of us in the way that fits our character. You and I are not like Isaiah, yet his calling is a perfect example of God making His will known to one of His children in a historic moment.

I was at family camp one summer where Wes Putnam was preaching the prophet Daniel. I do remember that he was describing the handwriting on the wall in the Babylonian banquet hall. Recall that King Belshazzar brought out the golden goblets from the Israelite temple. That evening, I saw my path of service clearly. Methodists have the custom of kneeling down facing our seat and praying with our elbows on the chair – perhaps with our Bible open before us. There on my knees I wept and prayed not to have such a hard journey. But the Lord did not let up, even on an unworthy servant like me. I made a confession like Isaiah's: a person of

unclean lips out of a people with sinful ways. I was convicted for myself and for my church. My friends and my pastor prayed for me. It took a couple more years for me to start school, confessing my shortcomings all the way. God's call and my answer have brought me to this moment and this place. It has all happened according to His will. He justifies us by His holy presence. He purifies us by the blood of the Worthy Lamb, Jesus of Nazareth – and He is leading us on to sanctification – the indwelling of His Holy Spirit forever.

This is the working of our Triune God – Father – Son and Holy Spirit. God is able to see into our hearts, knowing what we can become. He takes us: flawed, unsure, hesitant and awkward. He transforms us into instruments of His Peace – His Love – His Joy!

You can expect to experience your calling in a time of worshipping what is holy. Isaiah's confession, forgiveness and commission all take place while giving God glory, praise and adoration. We come and go from the sanctuary here in the world, but God's praise never stops.

The heavenly company is forever praising and glorifying God. We join in this eternal song. Our worship matters – coming together to praise God, confess our sin and seek forgiveness. We always pray to the Holy Spirit to be allowed to hear the Good News with discernment and to respond in Christ as our Heavenly Father wants us to. The pattern of gathering, praising, confessing, praying, hearing and responding is the appropriate response to our Holy God who claims us.

God meets us in our own context – God calls us in the midst of praise and worship. And finally, most important is that through Isaiah’s experience we learn that nobody gets to know God without being changed. The transforming power of God’s presence creates in us the will to serve God, to work for and witness in God’s name. Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This is the calling entrusted to the church, the body of Christ. We practice and we teach the discipline of prayerful discernment. We hope always to listen attentively for God’s call in our lives.

Opportunities are before us. Become part of sending hygiene kits to the OR-ID Annual Conference. Kits need to be ready by Sunday, June 10th. Find a place to serve in our Vacation Bible School – advertising, helping, teaching, assisting. It’s all good. Begin collecting change for a youth Heifer Project later this year. Find out how to support Prep4Kids in our area. Step up to volunteer for Family Promise, a ministry to homeless families with children. What great opportunities we have! Step out for Jesus! Overall, pray for the mission and ministry of the body of Christ in our area and beyond.

There is no mystery to being justified, purified and sanctified. These are not just theological words, they are the way we walk in this world and in the next. Amen.