

*“The God Who Calls”*  
*Isaiah 6:1-8*

**When you have something in your possession, it’s often best to not just stand there and do nothing with it.**

Playing baseball growing up, I can remember watching perfect pitches cross over the plate and just look at them from the “ready” position. The coach would say, “Son, that’s a bat you have there in your hands. You might want to use it to hit the ball.”

Boy Scout Troop # 7 invented a simple game we used to play before our Monday night meetings called “Bonzai”. It involved the thirty or so of us standing around in a circle with a softball sitting on the ground in the middle of us. Like a Quaker worship service, we’d remain still and silent until the “spirit” moved someone to rush to the middle, pick up the ball and run away from the rest screaming “bonzai”! The herd would then chase down the guy with the ball and pile on.

No one sprinted to the middle, grabbed the ball, and then just stood there. We ran for our lives. And then, when the mob got too close for comfort, we’d throw the ball away like a hot potato. All except for Mike Chrisman and Rex Ellis. Mike was the fastest kid in school. He’d just keep running until the scoutmaster called us in. Rex Ellis was the fastest big boy around. When he ran out of gas, he’d just turn and run back toward the mob.

When you have something in your possession, it’s often best to not just stand there and do nothing with it. A bat is used to hit a baseball. Two legs are used to run like crazy when Troop #7 is on your tail.

Last week we celebrated Pentecost and the coming of God’s Holy Spirit upon all people. The New Testament teaches the Holy Spirit gives each of us a gift or gifts to use in building up God’s Kingdom. Gifts are not given so that people can put them on ice. They’re given so that we might be useful servants of Jesus Christ.

God does not gift us for the purpose of puffing up our resumes. God gifts us with the intention of calling us out into the world, using those gifts to His glory and for the benefit of others.

Isaiah, the prophet, was one of God’s gifted children. The book of Isaiah begins with these words: *A vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah (1:1).*

We read an account of Uzziah’s reign in II Chronicles, chapter 26. He was sixteen years old when he began to reign, and he ruled fifty-two years in Jerusalem. It tells us *“he did what was right in the eyes of the Lord” (II Chronicles 26:4)*. It also says *“...as long as he sought the Lord, God made him prosper” (II Chronicles 26:5)*.

The Bible says:

*“he went out and made war against the Philistines” (26:6);*

*“he built cities” (26:6);*

*“his fame spread even to the border of Egypt” (26:8);*

*“he built towers in Jerusalem...in the wilderness, and hewed out many cisterns”(26:9-10)*

*“...(he) had an army of soldiers fit for war” (26:11)...*

*“three hundred and seven thousand five hundred” (26:13).*

*“In Jerusalem, he made engines...to be on the towers and the corners, to shoot arrows and great stones”(26:15).*

*“And his fame spread far, for he was marvelously helped, till he was strong” (26:15).*

The Bible also says:

*“But when he was strong he grew proud, to his destruction” (26:16).*

*“leprosy broke out on his forehead” (26:20)*

*“King Uzziah was a leper to the day of his death” (26:21)*

*“dwelt in a separate house” (26:26:21)*

*“excluded from the house of the Lord” (26:21)*

Isaiah’s **call** then came: *In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up...(Isaiah 6:1)*

And the voice of a seraphim called out. What’s a seraphim? Well, for one, seraphim appear only here in all the Bible. These were supernatural beings associated with the presence of God. The creatures had three pairs of wings: one for flying, one for covering their eyes, and one for covering their feet. They were “fiery” creatures.

*...Holy, holy, holy is **the Lord** of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory...cried out the seraphim.*

The foundations shook, and the place was filled with smoke.

That was enough to get Isaiah’s attention.

Isaiah 6:5: *“Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips...”*

Isaiah was living fresh in the year of the death of King Uzziah. The people could have been celebrating the life of a mighty king, but probably not. They were still in shock from seeing their leader go from riches to rags...

from health to leprosy...

from living in the center of the people to being excluded from the house of the Lord...

from life to death.

And everyone knew the reason for this dramatic downturn of events: *“But when he was strong he grew proud, to his destruction” (26:16).*

Isaiah spoke the truth here. It wasn’t just Uzziah who had gone astray. It wasn’t just all the others around the prophet who had faltered. As a matter of fact, Isaiah places himself at the front of the line: *“Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips...”*

And a mere three verses later, the Bible gives witness to one of the most dramatic turn-arounds in all of Scripture: *And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” Then I said, “Here am I! Send me” (Isaiah 6:8).*

Isaiah’s call: Isaiah 6:5: *Woe is me! For I am lost...* Isaiah 6:8: *Here am I! Send me.*

In between, one of the seraphim had taken tongs and picked up a burning coal from the altar, and the burning coal touched Isaiah’s lips. The seraphim said: *“Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin forgiven” (Isaiah 6:6-7).*

We worship a God who gifts us through the presence of the Holy Spirit. All who call on the name of Jesus Christ are gifted.

We worship a God who as we are gifted, calls us to service. All who are gifted are called upon by God to serve.

And through all this, we worship a God who offers forgiveness and new beginnings.

What would it be like if every year about this time all of Woodland Baptist Church would look and see the Lord God sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up?

What would it be like if every year about this time all of Woodland Baptist Church would hear the voice of the seraphim: Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory.

What would it be like if every year about this time all of Woodland Baptist Church would cry out: Woe is us! We are lost!

What would it be like if every year about this time all of Woodland Baptist Church would have its lips touched by the burning coal of forgiveness and have all guilt taken away?

What would it be like if every year about this time all of Woodland Baptist Church would cry out: *Here we are! Send us!*

Or...maybe not.

Take away the throne...

Take away all the shaking...  
and all the smoke...

and the six-winged seraphim...

Forget the burning coal, too...

What if every year about this time some servants from among us were to pray and put their heads together and ask themselves the question: *Who will we call upon to serve among us this year?* What if every year at Woodland Baptist Church about this time every one of us were presented with the opportunity to gaze upon that very same God of Isaiah. Only this time, God didn't come in a vision. God came rather in a phone call...from a sister; from a brother...asking us to serve out of gratitude for all that God has done for us.

The only ones who could ever rightfully respond to such a call would be the ones who **could** look around and point an accusing finger at the failure of another...who could pass the buck...but instead say, *"Lord, I'm lost. Why would you ever consider using someone like me?"*

The only ones who could ever rightfully respond to such a call would be the ones who know themselves to be the chiefest of sinners...yet still forgiven.

The only ones who could ever rightfully respond to such a call would be the ones who are grateful to God...not the pastor present or the pastor of twenty, thirty, forty years ago...but grateful to God for His eternal, wonderful, unmerited love.

Grow up, Woodland Baptist Church. An eleven year old knows better than to stand there with a bat on the shoulder when pitches are flying by. A Boy Scout knows better than to pick up the bonzai ball and just stand there. A Christian knows better than to receive a gift from God...a call from God...and then to stand idly by while that call goes unanswered. Grow up, Woodland Baptist Church.

