

Devotions for the Week of January 21, 2018

LARGE-PRINT

North East United Methodist Church

Rev. Dr. Drew M. Christian

Sunday, January 21, 2018

Read Isaiah 6:1-8.

King Uzziah died around 740 BC at a time when the Assyrians began to dominate the Near East. It marked the beginning of Israel being dominated by foreign powers including Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome. It is during this time Isaiah has a vision, is taken to heaven where he stands before the throne of God.

Isaiah stands before the throne of God, hearing angels singing "*Holy, Holy, Holy,*" their voices echoing, sensing the foundations shaking and smelling the smoke upon the altar. It is a magnificent and mysterious sight. And Isaiah immediately feels his unworthiness, his sin. How can he stand before a holy and perfect and magnificent God?

Isaiah cries out, "*It's all over! I am doomed, for I am a sinful man. I have filthy lips, and I live among a people with filthy lips. Yet I have seen the King, the Lord of Heaven's Armies.*" God is holy and we are not. It is only after receiving a clean heart, only after the seraphim flew down to Isaiah with a burning coal and touched his lips, removing his guilt, forgiving his sins, that Isaiah could hear God's call on his life.

When Isaiah comes before God, he is immediately convicted of his sin and cries out in remorse. He repents and God forgives. Only then can he hear God's voice.

God has a call on each of our lives. We were created for a purpose. God is ready to use us, to send us, to work through us using the special gifts he has blessed each of us with, to put us together in a body, the church, in order to achieve His mission.

But we must hear what He has to say to us. We must hear the call on our lives, the direction we must go. We cannot hear this unless we first repent of our sin, confess our wrongdoing, and receive a clean heart, receive God's forgiveness.

If we want to experience revival, if we want to experience and hear God's call on our lives, we must first repent. In the United Methodist Church we have a prayer of "*Confession and Pardon*" as part of our communion liturgy. It reads,

**Merciful God,
we confess that we have not loved you
with our whole heart.
We have failed to be an obedient church.
We have not done your will,
we have broken your law,
we have rebelled against your love,
we have not loved our neighbors,
and we have not heard the cry of the needy.
Forgive us, we pray.
Free us for joyful obedience,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

What might happen if everyone in our congregation prayed such a prayer daily? If everyone in our nation prayed such a prayer daily? If we truly met it, crying out to God to forgive us for our stupidity, our selfishness, our mess-ups? What might we hear? What might we see? How might God show up?

I love another prayer of confession in The United Methodist Hymnal. It reads,

**From the cowardice that dares not face new truth,
from the laziness that is contented with half-truth,
from the arrogance that thinks it knows all truth,
Good Lord, deliver me. Amen.**

Like Isaiah come before God and cry out to Him. Confess everything for God already knows. Stand before God as a child, recognizing that not only are you a sinner but you know nothing. Ask for His forgiveness, for His Holy Spirit to touch you, cleanse you, and create in you a new heart. Ask to hear His "*still, small voice*," to know what He is calling you to do, where He is calling you to go. And when you hear, respond like Isaiah, "*Here am I! Send me.*"

Monday, January 22, 2018

Read Isaiah 6:1-8.

Before Isaiah stands in the throne room of God, God is silent. God is silent before and after Isaiah's revelation, his vision. It is in the silence that we often find God, often hear His voice.

Perhaps we don't hear God's voice in our lives like Isaiah because of the constant noise that surrounds us. We wake up each day to cell phones ringing, talk radio screaming, news of war and rumors of wars, ugly shouts of partisan politics, gossip, blasts of car horns, televisions blaring. With so much noise in our lives how can we ever hope to hear God speak.

It is in the silence that God draws near. Take time this week to just sit, to go to a place, sit in your car, at home when others are out. Sit in silence, push the noise aside, turn off the cell phone, and ask God to speak. Pray, confess, seek forgiveness, and then just listen. Listen.

Tuesday, January 23, 2018

Read Revelation 4:1-11.

Isaiah was not the only one to stand before the throne of God. John shares his vision, the moment he was "*immediately in the Spirit; and behold, a throne set in heaven, One sat on the throne.*"

What an amazing picture of what awaits, of God's glory and magnificence. *"And He who sat there was like a jasper and a sardius stone...there was a rainbow around the throne...around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and on the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white robes...and from the throne proceeded lightings, thunderings, and voices...seven lamps of fire...a sea of glass, like crystal...four living creatures..."* And all were singing, *"Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, Who was and is and is to come!"*

The angels sing, *"You are worthy, O Lord, To receive glory and honor and power..."* How often do we approach God as HOLY? Richard D. Phillips, in The Triune God, writes,

Sometimes people say to me, "Pastor, why should I go to church?" There are many good reasons to go to church. We might say, "You'll benefit from the fellowship we've got nice people here. You might meet a nice girl here, or a nice boy here. There are big business contracts here. You'll enjoy the music. Maybe the preaching will be interesting." Some of this is true to one extent or another, but the reason for us to gather with excitement and to prepare for worship, to set aside time, to come together as the people of God is because God is holy. He is holy, exalted, transcendent God, and he demands and deserves our worship. He is holy, and when we emphasize and prioritize true worship, we bear testimony to that before the world.

Just as God is holy, so also is the gospel of Jesus Christ a holy revelation of salvation...We come to the cross of Jesus Christ. Many in our day are saying, "The cross offends us." But it is

a holy cross that comes from God, and we must receive it. We must humble ourselves. We must confess our sins and lay them on the cross of Christ if we are to meet with God. There is no others. We must not treat it casually. We dare not neglect the offer purchased by the blood of God's Son... Yes, he will have his holy way with us according to his will and the display of his holy majesty. And we must come to him on his holy terms only.

Can we picture how God would view some of the things He sees happening in the church, some of the things we say and do, the way we sometimes treat others, the way we sometimes treat worship? We want it to fit our schedules, to get out on time, to be entertaining, to speak to us. What about God? Does He sometimes get lost in our wants, our desires, on Sunday mornings?

How might you approach Sunday mornings differently if you were to focus on God's holiness? How might you approach prayer at a meeting or Bible study, opening God's Word, differently if God's holiness was front-and-center? Would you cry out for forgiveness? Would you recognize your sin before His magnificence? Would you bow to Him, kneel at the alter more, sing more loudly and boldly? Would you shake in His presence? Would you walk across the aisle at church and ask forgiveness from someone you were at odds with before worship started? Would you push your self, your desires, your schedule, your preferences out of the way so only God would be your focus?

Pray and reflect on God's holiness. He deserves our worship, our faithfulness, our obedience, our focus, our attention. Ask God to change your heart and fill you with a deeper understanding of His Holiness, His glory.

Wednesday, January 24, 2018

God asks Isaiah a question I believe He asks all of us,
"Whom shall I send, And who will go for us?"

Will we go? And we must understand that we do not go alone. The Holy Spirit goes with us, giving us strength. The Holy Spirit, God Himself, also gives us gifts to use as we go forth, as we serve Him and touch the world. We too must respond, *"Here am I! Send me."*

Perhaps at times, this all seems overwhelming. God has given us a gift, that is an intricate part of the *"body of Christ,"* that we are responsible for in order to help build up the church and reach people with the Gospel message. For many of us that can be scary. It is a huge responsibility and a lot to take in...to think that we are that important to God and He trusts us that much.

Read I Corinthians 12:7 and Acts 2:38.

At times we may be fearful or it may seem overwhelming, but God doesn't put us out there on our own; God gives us a helper in the Holy Spirit. Henry Blackaby writes, *"God gave each of the judges in the Bible an assignment. Then the Spirit of God came upon each one and equipped him or her to complete the assignment given. David was called to be king when he was a shepherd. How could he possibly be king when he had never been king? The Spirit of God came upon him and equipped him to be king. Ezekiel was called to be a prophet. How could he possibly be a prophet? The Scripture says the Spirit of God came upon him and caused him to do everything God asked of him (Ezek. 2-3)...Throughout...the Spirit of God always was present to equip an individual to carry out a divine assignment. [Throughout scripture] the Spirit manifested His presence by equipping each individual to function where God had assigned him."*

As someone once said, *"God doesn't call the equipped... God equips the called."* Whatever God is calling you to do, whatever gift God has blessed you with, whatever part of the

“*body of Christ*” God is asking you to play, He will walk with you as you fulfill that role. His Spirit will go with you.

Read I Corinthians 12:4-6.

Ask God to take away your fear, to take away worry, and to take away thoughts like “I don’t have time to serve” or “I can’t do that.” Ask God to help you feel His presence and to help you remember that He goes with you.

God will provide you the strength to step up and fulfill the role you were created to fulfill. As Blackaby writes, “*When God builds a local church as the body of Christ, He adds members to the body and trains them to match the assignment He has for that body. He builds a local church body in a way that enables that body to respond to Him. Then God can accomplish an assignment through that body.*” You are at North East United Methodist Church for a reason, for a purpose, to fulfill a role in allowing us, as the body of Christ, to come together and with our gifts accomplish the next assignment God is giving us. God will give you the strength and words if you are willing to follow.

Pray for that strength and confidence in God. Pray that together, we as a church, North East United Methodist Church, will accomplish God’s assignment for us. Pray for REVIVAL.

Thursday, January 25, 2018

Read I Peter 4: 10-11.

You have been given a gift and asked to manage it to build up God’s people. How do you discover your gift, your calling? First, you must accept Christ into your heart...you must place Him first in your life. Once you have done that, START...

S tudy

T rial and Error

A nalyze

R equest Responses from Others

T ake Training

In order to know, grow, love and live...all actions that require a decision and commitment...we must be intentional. We must also be intentional about discovering our spiritual gifts, our purpose, the position we are to play on the team. We must study, get involved and try different ministries, analyze how God is working through us, how we are feeling, how God has created us. We must talk to others, who can sometimes see our gifts easier than we can ourselves. We must take training and learn from others who have studied and whom God has worked through. We must be intentional.

Pray that God will show you and help you take the next step to discovering your gifts, the ministry you are called to, and areas in which you are needed in the church.

Friday, January 26, 2018

Read I Corinthians 12.

Henry Blackaby writes,

“I’ve mentioned Ivah Bates before. She was a widow who had lived on a farm and was retired. She was one of the greatest prayers I have ever known. Our church was the body of Christ, and we called Ivah a knee. God put her in the body as a powerful prayer. When we had new believers, I would send them over to Ivah and let her talk to them about how to pray. She equipped many people to pray. When we began our ministry to the university campus, Ivah didn’t know how to function in the body concerning the campus. Who was to equip her to function in the body in this new ministry? Well, our campus minister was. He shared with Ivah how she could pray regarding the campus. She did not change her role in the body.

She just learned how to be the “knee” (prayer) for the campus. The students were told, “Whenever you are going to witness to somebody or you have a particular assignment in our ministry, go to Ivah and tell her about it. She will pray.” So a student named Wayne said to Ivah, “Next Tuesday I will be witnessing to Doug, would you pray for me?” Ivah agreed. She dropped everything and began to pray over the noon hour while Wayne was witnessing. She did that every time the students told her what they were doing. Only the “hand” was touching the campus, but the whole body was fitly joined together. Each part functioned where God put it, so that the hand could be effective. About three months later, a young man came down the aisle during the invitation. He was trusting the Lord. I said to the congregation, “This is Doug. He has just become a Christian.” I looked over at Ivah and she was deeply moved and weeping. She had never met Doug, but she had prayed for him for three months. Who won Doug to the Lord? The body did!”

Just like a baseball team needs every position to succeed in the game, the church needs every position in order to succeed in its ministry. Every position is vital to the success of the team. This week, I hope you will pray about what your gift is, how God wants to use you to be part of this team at North East United Methodist Church and the vision God is giving us to be a church that reaches outside its doors to this community for Christ. It is in using your gifts that you, like Ivah, will be fed and feel fulfilled as you serve God and minister to others.

What is your gift? How does God want you to get involved? What position on the team are you to play? Have you sat down

with the pastor to discuss your role in the body? Pray for guidance and understanding as to the role God has in mind for you to play at North East United Methodist Church.

For Further Study This Weekend:

Read through these 10 truths about spiritual gifts and the scriptures that go with each...

1. Only believers have spiritual gifts **I Corinthians 2:14**
2. Every Christian has at least one gift **I Corinthians 7:7**
3. No one receives all the gifts **I Corinthians 12:27-30**
4. No single gift is given to everyone **I Corinthians 12:29-30**
5. You can't earn a spiritual gift. **Ephesians 4:7**
6. The Holy Spirit decides our gifts **I Corinthians 12:11**
7. The gifts I'm given are permanent **Romans 11:29**
8. I am to develop the gifts God gives me **I Timothy 4:14**
9. It's a sin to waste the gifts God gave me
I Corinthians 4:1-2, Matthew 25: 14-30
10. Using my gifts glorifies God and grows me **John 15:8**

Talk to others, the pastor, and members of the church. Discover your gifts and what God is calling you to get involved in, where you will make a difference in the life and eternity of another.

Remember that your primary ministry commitment should be in the area in which you are gifted; your secondary ministry includes serving in any other area of the Body where you are needed. Read Jesus' parable again in **Matthew 25: 14-30**. It is a sin to waste the gifts God has given us. We must spend time on this.

We must spend time on discovering what our gifts are, what God is calling us to do, what role we can play in the "*body of*

Christ.” Pray that God will continue to reveal to you what position you are being called to play on God’s team.

Take time to thank Him for not only loving you so much He would give His own Son, Jesus Christ, but that He has designed you with love and with a purpose in mind. You are important to the work of the kingdom. Thank God for that awesome responsibility and privilege, and allow Him to lead you to discovering the steps you need to take to fulfill your life’s mission – to help others know Jesus and God’s love for them.

Saturday, January 27, 2018

Read and reflect on the scriptures from the Revised Common Lectionary. The scriptures for this coming week January 21st, Third Sunday after the Epiphany, are:

- Jonah 3:1-5, 10
- Psalm 62:5-12
- I Corinthians 7:29-31
- Mark 1:14-20

And don't forget to invite someone to church, to pick them up and bring them, so they may hear the Word of God, be part of a family of faith, and come to know Jesus!



