# Here I am Lord! Send Me!

Sermon Preached by Rev. Chuck Cole a St. John’s UMC Staunton, VA 03/22/2020

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# Isaiah 6 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

### A Vision of God in the Temple

**6** In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lofty; and the hem of his robe filled the temple. **2** Seraphs were in attendance above him; each had six wings: with two they covered their faces, and with two they covered their feet, and with two they flew. **3** And one called to another and said:

“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts;

the whole earth is full of his glory.”

**4** The pivots[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah+6&version=NRSV#fen-NRSV-17774a)] on the thresholds shook at the voices of those who called, and the house filled with smoke. **5** And I said: “Woe is me! I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; yet my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!”

**6** Then one of the seraphs flew to me, holding a live coal that had been taken from the altar with a pair of tongs. **7** The seraph[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah+6&version=NRSV#fen-NRSV-17777b)] touched my mouth with it and said: “Now that this has touched your lips, your guilt has departed and your sin is blotted out.” **8** Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” And I said, “Here am I; send me!”

Our Isaiah reading this morning is one of my favorite passages of scripture it is dramatic, powerful, mystical and somewhat fantastical. It gives us a glimpse of God’s greatness, holiness and Love.

But I also love it because it is the account of Isaiah's call and he responds to the opportunity presented by God’s grace with the kind of faith that I hope I respond as well and each of us can learn from him.

That said lets delve in.

Isaiah finds himself in the presence of God in his throne room in a way that he truly never had imagined possible. Before him is seated God on his Throne high and lofty and his robe is so long that it fills the temple - this is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

Around Him fly Seraphs fiery six winged creatures who because they are in the presence of God cover their faces and feet - in reverence but also because his glory is so bright they would be destroyed.

These six-winged fire dragons if you will are flying around above the Lord and they are singing continuously

“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts;

the whole earth is full of his glory.”

The Seraphs are saying the Lord is the Holiest of all, the truly and completely Holy One. Also because his reign, authority is over everything everywhere. They say it continuously because it is always true and his power and glory always fills the whole earth.

Isaiah realizes where he is and immediately says “Woe is me! I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; yet my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!”

In the presence of the Holy One he realizes how unholy he actually is and that if the faithful ones who constantly serve and extol God’s holiness cannot see him that surely he a sinful man with an evil tongue is doomed.

The truth of his statement is not contradicted but confirmed. I love it. But this reality is answered not with Judgement but with Grace.

A seraph takes a burning coal from the altar and flies over with it and touches Isaiah’s lips but he is not burned up he is instead forgiven and healed. The Holy Love of God cleanses him in precisely the place of his deepest sin and need- his tongue.

The Lord then immediately poses the question not directly to Isaiah but to the room.

Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?”

Isaiah immediately replies “Here I am, Send me!”. A moment ago he was convinced he would be destroyed he is so unholy but now he revels in God’s grace and volunteers to be used by him. God uses him as a prophet. He calls him to use his tongue to serve him to use the place in him where Grace worked most profoundly.

Like Isaiah we are all desperately wanting in the presence of God but because of God’s Amazing Grace in Christ we can go to him. There are various places in our lives where sin and weakness find a place. Then in Christ we have this kind of amazing Grace and he asks “Whom shall I send” and he is looking for us to say “Here am I send me!”

Although this time is strange for us Christians have been living faithfully in pandemics throughout the ages

The Antonine Plague (165-180 A.D.) and the Cyprian Plague (249-262 A.D.). Plagues killed roughly a quarter to a third of the population, striking down emperors (Marcus Aurelius, Hostilian, and Claudius II Gothicus), and ravaging the empire (our current pandemic is nowhere near this virulent). People knew it was contagious but did not understand how to protect themselves. Those like the Pagan physician Galen escaped to the country. Those that could not threw the sick into the streets to die and avoided them. The Christians still a small minority though instead nursed the sick and dying which drastically improved survival and made those who did die far more comfortable and dignified. Of course a percentage of Christians who would not have been infected were and ultimately died. The early church considered these people Martyrs and their witness and contact they made helps explain how by the 300’s half the Empire was Christian.

They said in their vulnerability and weakness rejoicing in God’s love and confident in his Grace and resurrection “Here I am Lord, Send Me!” Like Isaiah they knew that God had shown them immense grace and they were confident in the Grace God had given in Christ and would give in the Resurrection so they were able to love their neighbor as Christ loved them.

Our faithful response will be different. As we respond let us remember our text from Last week. Psalm 121 tells us that the Lord is our Help, that he keeps us making us more and more like Christ and in his task of keeping us he neither slumber nor sleeps, he does not get exhausted or need brakes. There is no place, where he is not.

Something we can all do is pray. Maybe you feel like prayer is not your strong suit - the beauty of Grace - is there are no special words to make our prayers powerful just trust that the God of grace is hearing us and will respond so let us pray to the one who the Seraphim sing “Holy Holy Holy is the Lord God almighty. Heaven and earth are full of his Glory”. He will take our weakness and make it strong. Let us say “Here I Am. Send Me! In prayer.”

Our Bishop has invited all of us to pray the following prayer at noon each day. Yesterday she Facebook lived this prayer and it was beautiful to join with her. You could join with her by searching Sharma D. Lewis and friending her a worthwhile exercise.

Almighty God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit,

We thank you for your blessings, past, present and future.

You are our rock and the source of our hope in all things and at all times.

As Jehovah Jireh, our provider God, we ask you this day to stretch out your mighty hand and eradicate from the face of the earth forever this virus called COVID-19 (coronavirus) that is spreading rapidly from continent to continent.

We also pray that you, Jehovah Rapha, our healing God, would place your hand upon all of those who have been stricken by this virus and restore them to full health.

Be with those who have lost loved ones and are grieving. Protect all who are caring for those with this virus and keep them from contracting it themselves. Calm our fears and provide us with your peace that surpasses all understanding. Strengthen us with the joy of the Lord and help us to hold firmly to the hope that only you can provide.

Unify us that we, the Virginia Annual Conference, may be able to experience anew the promise of your presence in and through the unity of our faith, hope and trust in you in the days ahead and forever.

We offer this prayer in the mighty name of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

AMEN.

Let us pray for eradication of the disease, for health care workers of all kinds, and their families, others in essential jobs like truck drivers, postal employees, grocery store workers, those for whom social distancing is a great burden, the elderly, the lonely, those stuck in abusive situations, for prisoners and others who cannot meaningfully social distance and are at greater risk, people whose income is curtailed and for businesses.

Along with prayer let us praise the Lord for his blessings in this time, let us worship the Lord with Gladness - play, sing and dance to worship music in your home.

Join in several worship services on line today. I have talked to several people who did this last Sunday. They are almost all recorded and available afterward.

Celebrate Good News.

The cases in many early hit countries are declining rapidly, Vaccines are being made, Treatments devised

At the Cole household we have eaten more family dinners together recently, I have spoken to one of my sister more in the last week than I had in the previous two months. Our kids are getting lots of outdoor play time. These blessings are not just being experienced by us.

Many are finding rest they desperately need.

Also bless God for the new and creative ways that are being found to care for each other.

As we look at our world and remember God’s grace and faithfulness let us say

“Here I Am Lord! Send Me!” in our everyday lives.

In this time of social distancing living out “here I am Lord! Send Me!” will look different than it usually might.

Social distancing is a strange kind of love but it is an act of love and for many of us a sacrifice for the good of others. The fewer of us get sick the better people who need medical attention for Corona Virus and other needs will be able to get it and the outcomes will be better for everybody.

While social distancing, we have numerous opportunities to draw closer to others in a variety of ways.

You can drop off a care package to an at risk neighbor, offer to loan games or puzzles to families with children at home, send a note to a single person stuck at home, You can connect via the mail with others, over the phone, via email, Facebook etc.

Introverts look out for your extroverted friends.

I talked to a parishioner this week who though older and in self-quarantine has decided that she would take the opportunity to write notes of encouragement to all kinds of people. She could say there is nothing I can do but she is saying Lord here I am send me - and that is the call and I tell you a piece of mail that encourages is indeed powerful.

Remember Paul spent much of his ministry socially distanced in prison or under house arrest and his correspondence makes up about half the New Testament.

For some of us this time may mean dusting off old skills and learning new ones.

Maybe write a note or card of encouragement, either for a specific healthcare employee you know or for any healthcare employee. Individually wrapped snacks might be appreciated. Many hospital staff are working long shifts and cannot break for meals. Remember this is also a challenging time for those working at assisted living and long-term care facilities as well as hospitals. Please check with your local hospitals and other centers to ensure they can receive and deliver mail or snacks etc. before doing this.

Also maybe find a way to show love and witness to those who will be coming to your mail people, those behind them, and ups and delivery personnel.

We may find ourselves called to love and serve in a place where we feel weak. The Lord will empower you as you strive to serve him.

Let us remember in this time the powerful grace and love of God which has forgiven us and which sends us. Let us remember his great goodness which will never leave us or forsake us. Let us remember that he uses our weakness and makes it strong.