

Last week, we had a story of Prophet Elijah, a person of נָבִיא [kah-NAH]—a person on fire for God from the Northern Kingdom of Israel, called "Israel" (1 Kings 19:10a). He was one of God's messengers during the time of polarization when idolatry had spread throughout this divided nation. Through his story, we've learned that the people of נָבִיא [kah-NAH] believe that their God is alive. They believe that they are God's representatives. And also, they believe in God's power.

Today, we have a story of Prophet Isaiah, prophesied when Judah, the Southern Kingdom of Israel, was beginning to the end as a nation. Through his story, we will see how "regular" people become the people of נָבִיא [kah-NAH]. In the year that King Uzziah, a king of Judah, died (742 BCE), according to Chapter 6 of the Book of Isaiah, Isaiah was in a crowd gathered to worship God at the Jerusalem Temple. In worship, he encountered God and became a prophet, a person of נָבִיא [kah-NAH]. When people meet God, they become the people of נָבִיא [kah-NAH].

For Prophet Isaiah, he encountered God when he went to the Temple in Jerusalem to worship God. In worship, he "saw" three particular things about God. First, he saw God's holiness. Isaiah 6:3 says, "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty, the whole earth is full of his glory." Secondly, Isaiah saw God's glory, which fills the whole earth (Isaiah 6:3). Thirdly, Isaiah experienced God's awesomeness of the Almighty when he heard "the sound of voices, the doorposts and thresholds shook, and the Temple was filled with smoke" (Isaiah 6:4).

After seeing God's holiness, glory, and almightiness, this ordinary worshiper of God, Isaiah, cried, "Woe to me! I am ruined! I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty" (Isaiah 6:5). When Isaiah saw God, he acknowledged his own sinfulness. It's not about self-deprecating. It's not about beating ourselves. It is not about saying that I am unworthy, which, by the way, it is not true. Jesus does not say we are unworthy. And when we say we are unworthy, we demean the sacrifice Jesus made for us because He thinks we are worthy. Because of that, He has sacrificed for us.

Now, let's put ourselves in perspective to have the right mindset when dealing with other people because there's a way to communicate how God feels about me and

how God feels about you. We see a whole lot of people who are spending their time talking to the world about how it should be working in the attitude of "I have everything figured out, and you are wrong." We often can come off in that way also. Of course, we would never say that, but people can read the attitude behind the statement we are making verbally. In that case, the stated message would not have any receptivity among listeners.

Encountering God, seeing God, meeting God humbles those chosen people first to transform them to be the people of נָאִי [kah-NAH], the passionate spokespersons of God who carry God's message. Especially, this is more critical for Isaiah since he would be the spokesperson of God for the time when people do not want to hear God or God's message.

The same thing occurs today when people understand that God is holy and "see" His glory. The Bible states, "There is no one righteous, not even one," and "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:10 & 23). Isaiah confessed that he has "unclean lips." This may surprise us since he was a worshiper of God. The worshipers of God! Are we clean? Are we sinless? Are we a little bit cleaner than others because we worship God or attend the church? Let me move on here.

"One of the seraphim flew to me," Isaiah says, "with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. With it he touched my mouth and said, 'See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for'" (Isaiah 6:6-7). The Biblical word atonement means "a covering." Notice that the live coal was used to touch the part of Isaiah's lip that he expressly mentioned as unclean. The Word of God does the same thing for us. It touches our lives where we most need it. Further, notice that the blessing of atonement included the removal of guilt.

Then Prophet Isaiah heard the voice of the Lord say to him, "Whom shall I send? And Who will go for us?" (Isaiah 6:8). After seeing the Lord, Isaiah heard God's call to proclaim the Lord's message to others in the world. Isaiah responded, "Here am I. Send me!" Did he know what he was getting into? Did he know he was called to speak to the people who did not want to hear him? Did he know he would condemn his own people and watch the nation crumble and perish? Let me be a little more drastic here. According to the Book of Isaiah, chapter 20, well, let me just read the scripture as it is written without paraphrasing it. I am reading Isaiah 20:2-3 in the Message Translation:

*GOD told Isaiah, son of Amoz, "Go, take off your clothes and sandals," and Isaiah did it, going about naked and barefooted. Then GOD said, "Just as my servant Isaiah has walked around town naked and barefooted for three years as a warning sign to Egypt and Ethiopia, so the king of Assyria is going to come and take the Egyptians as captives and the Ethiopians as exiles.*

Do you think Isaiah knew he would be delivering God's message to people by walking around the town naked for three years? I don't think Isaiah has a clue on what he was getting himself into when he said, "Here am I. Send me."

Many pastors did not know what they were getting into when they accepted the call to ordained ministry. Did we, the pastors, know we need to be a producer and videographer in ministry like we are these days? No, we didn't. But we are because of our call to ministry we said, "Here am I. Send me." How about our church leaders? They took the leadership positions in ministry, knowing all things what they would do? No. There are "ministry descriptions" or "job descriptions" for the leadership positions of the church, but most of us who have involved in church know that the ministry does not go by the book line by line. And yet, we are still here, pressing on in ministry, for God's sake. Thanks be to God!

The lesson from today's story of Prophet Isaiah is this. To become a person of נָאִי [kah-NAH], we need to meet God, experience God personally. Without that, we would not be able to say, "Here am I. Send me." I pray that all of us who worship our awesome God today will meet God and experience God personally in this hour of worship. Amen.