

COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS ON THE LESSONS FOR FEBRUARY 9, 2025

Isaiah 6:1-13

- “In the year that King Uzziah died” This simple phrase requires some historical context, which we find in 2 Chronicles 26. King Uzziah reigned over Judah for 52 years. We are told that “he did what was right in the sight of the Lord He set himself to seek God ... and as long as he sought the Lord, God made him prosper.” (2 Chron 26:4-5) His fame and his strength “spread far, for he was marvelously helped until he became strong.” (2 Chron 26:15) But “he grew proud, to his destruction” (2 Chron 26:16), entering the temple to make an offering – a position reserved only to the priests. When he became angry after being confronted by eighty priests, he was struck with leprosy. As a consequence, he lived out the rest of his days in a separate house and could not enter the temple. In the brokenness of the country, as Judah longed for healing ... “in the year that King Uzziah died” ... Isaiah sees the Lord. These simple words remind us that God shows up most especially when we are broken.
- This vision also reminds us that God not only comes in our country’s brokenness. God also comes in our brokenness. Isaiah does not feel worthy to be called by God; yet, God reminds Isaiah that he is empowered by God’s forgiveness. We are encouraged to respond to God’s call like Isaiah: “Here am I; send me.”
- Finally, as with last week’s lesson on the call of Jeremiah, the call of Isaiah shows that God’s message is not necessarily easy or comforting. Indeed, God tells Isaiah that this message will be ignored and neglected.

Psalms 138

- How do you understand the phrase “before the gods I sing your praise” – especially as we confess that God is the only god? Does this show that the psalmist believed in more than one god?
- When the psalmist speaks of God answering him, note that it is not getting what we want. Rather, he says, “you increased my strength within me.” (v. 3) In other words, we are given the strength to face whatever comes our way. Interestingly, the New Revised Standard Version translates this verse as “you increased my strength of soul” with an alternative wording in a footnote, “you made me arrogant in my soul with strength.”
- This psalm comforts us and reminds us that God is with us “in the midst of trouble.”
- We are also empowered by this psalm that God has a purpose for us and that God “will make good [that] purpose for me.” Have you discovered God’s purpose for you? Have you seen how God is making good that purpose?

1 Corinthians 15:1-11

- These verses reflect the earliest account of the resurrection of Jesus, since Paul writes this about 15 years before the first gospel was written. While much of this sounds familiar to the gospel accounts, it includes at least two appearances not recorded in the gospels: the appearance of Jesus to 500 and his appearance to James.
- Paul writes these words not because some in the Corinthian church do not believe in the resurrection of Jesus. He writes this because they do not believe in their own resurrection. The resurrection of Jesus promises that we will all be raised. Paul finds this hope of resurrection to be central to the good news of Jesus.
- This passage continues a theme in all three lessons that God comes even when we do not feel worthy. Paul refers to himself as “the least of the apostles, unfit to be called an apostle.” He calls himself “one untimely born” – literally, “an aborted fetus.” God’s grace does not depend on Paul’s worth ... or ours. Rather, we are empowered by Paul’s words that “by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me has not been in vain.”

Luke 5:1-11

- This story can be read on a spiritual level in several ways. Look what happens when Jesus enters the boats. The miracle of the catch of fish happens after Jesus has used the fishing boats as a means to teach the crowds. What will happen when we invite Jesus into our “boat”? What does it mean to invite Jesus into our “boat”?
- Notice also what Jesus asks Simon to do: “Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch.” Simon has been working all night – doing the same thing over and over – and catching nothing! “Put out into the deep water” – do something different, and let God show you what can happen! Where are we called to “put out into the deep water”? Where are we called to break out of old patterns and do something different?
- Notice also that Jesus uses Simon’s background to call him to something more. Simon is not called to forget his role as a fisherman. Rather, Jesus calls Simon to understand his role and background in a new way in service to the Reign of God. How is God calling you to understand your role and background in a new way?
- For the third time in the readings, we hear someone say that they are not worthy: “Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!” The call of God, the call of Jesus, does not depend on our self-worth or on our self-righteousness. That call depends on the grace of God alone!