

## **February 9, 2024—Fifth Sunday after Epiphany**

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### **Introduction**

The fifth Sunday after Epiphany continues to highlight unlikely instruments and circumstances appointed to reveal God's glory. "Who will go for us?" God asks. A person of unclean lips, a former persecutor of the church of God, and three fishermen who couldn't catch a thing. More surprising still, perhaps, is that we are also called.

### **Prayer of the Day**

Most holy God, the earth is filled with your glory, and before you angels and saints stand in awe. Enlarge our vision to see your power at work in the world, and by your grace make us heralds of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

**Amen.**

### **First Reading: Isaiah 6:1-8 [9-13]**

<sup>1</sup>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. <sup>2</sup>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. <sup>3</sup>And one called to another and said:

"Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts;  
the whole earth is full of his glory."

<sup>4</sup>The pivots on the thresholds shook at the voices of those who called, and the house filled with smoke. <sup>5</sup>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!"

<sup>6</sup>Then one of the seraphs flew to me, holding a live coal that had been taken from the altar with a pair of tongs. <sup>7</sup>The seraph touched my mouth with it and said: "Now that this has touched your lips, your guilt has departed and your sin is blotted out." <sup>8</sup>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!" [<sup>9</sup>And he said, "Go and say to this people:

'Keep listening, but do not comprehend;  
keep looking, but do not understand.'

<sup>10</sup>Make the mind of this people dull,  
and stop their ears,  
and shut their eyes,  
so that they may not look with their eyes,  
and listen with their ears,  
and comprehend with their minds,  
and turn and be healed."

<sup>11</sup>Then I said, "How long, O Lord?" And he said:

“Until cities lie waste  
without inhabitant,  
and houses without people,  
and the land is utterly desolate;  
<sup>12</sup>until the LORD sends everyone far away,  
and vast is the emptiness in the midst of the land.  
<sup>13</sup>Even if a tenth part remain in it,  
it will be burned again,  
like a terebinth or an oak  
whose stump remains standing  
when it is felled.”  
The holy seed is its stump.

### **Psalm 138**

<sup>1</sup>I will give thanks to you, O LORD, with my whole heart;  
before the gods I will sing your praise.  
<sup>2</sup>**I will bow down toward your holy temple and praise your name, because of your  
steadfast love and faithfulness;  
for you have glorified your name and your word above all things.**  
<sup>3</sup>When I called, you answered me;  
you increased my strength within me.  
<sup>4</sup>**All the rulers of the earth will praise you, O LORD,  
when they have heard the words of your mouth.**  
<sup>5</sup>They will sing of the ways of the LORD,  
that great is the glory of the LORD.  
<sup>6</sup>**The LORD is high, yet cares for the lowly,  
perceiving the haughty from afar.**  
<sup>7</sup>Though I walk in the midst of trouble, you keep me safe;  
you stretch forth your hand against the fury of my enemies; your right hand shall save me.  
<sup>8</sup>**You will make good your purpose for me;  
O LORD, your steadfast love endures forever; do not abandon the works of your hands.**

### **Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 15:1-11**

<sup>1</sup>Now I would remind you, brothers and sisters, of the good news that I proclaimed to you,  
which you in turn received, in which also you stand, <sup>2</sup>through which also you are being saved, if  
you hold firmly to the message that I proclaimed to you—unless you have come to believe in  
vain.

<sup>3</sup>For I handed on to you as of first importance what I in turn had received: that Christ died for  
our sins in accordance with the scriptures, <sup>4</sup>and that he was buried, and that he was raised on

the third day in accordance with the scriptures,<sup>5</sup> and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.<sup>6</sup> Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers and sisters at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died.<sup>7</sup> Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles.<sup>8</sup> Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me.<sup>9</sup> For I am the least of the apostles, unfit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.<sup>10</sup> But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me has not been in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them—though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me.<sup>11</sup> Whether then it was I or they, so we proclaim and so you have come to believe.

### **Gospel: Luke 5:1-11**

<sup>1</sup>Once while Jesus was standing beside the lake of Gennesaret, and the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God,<sup>2</sup> he saw two boats there at the shore of the lake; the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets.<sup>3</sup> He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little way from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the crowds from the boat.<sup>4</sup> When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, “Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch.”<sup>5</sup> Simon answered, “Master, we have worked all night long but have caught nothing. Yet if you say so, I will let down the nets.”<sup>6</sup> When they had done this, they caught so many fish that their nets were beginning to break.<sup>7</sup> So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both boats, so that they began to sink.<sup>8</sup> But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus’ knees, saying, “Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!”<sup>9</sup> For he and all who were with him were amazed at the catch of fish that they had taken;<sup>10</sup> and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. Then Jesus said to Simon, “Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people.”<sup>11</sup> When they had brought their boats to shore, they left everything and followed him.

## Prayers of Intercession

With the Spirit of Christ shining upon us, let us boldly pray for the church, the world, and all of creation.

*A brief silence.*

God of surprising abundance, you call your people to enter deeply into the world. Equip us to respond to your call, gather up what we have, and offer it to all. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

God of creation, provide protection from the elements and other hazards to all whose work brings them outside: for fishers, ranchers, line workers, and construction crews. Guide us to live carefully alongside the wonders of the land and waters. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Open the hearts of all leaders, especially those who serve in the armed forces, that they respond to their commission with wisdom and patience. Ensure that all who serve are kept safe in body, mind, and spirit. We pray for an end to all war and armed conflict. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Fill with your compassionate presence all who are suffering from addiction, mental illness, injury, or illness of any kind. Draw helpers to their side so that they find relief from their burdens. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Call our faith communities to do marvelous things. Bless the labor and efforts of this congregation, that we may be a sign of your presence in the world. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

We thank you for those who have courageously gone before us in the faith. May we too show a deep trust in you throughout our lives. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

We entrust our prayers to you, O God, in the sure and certain hope that your promise is revealed among the people. **Amen.**

## Reflection

### God's Imperfect People

"Go in peace, share the good news." Week after week Christians gather together, hear the word proclaimed, share a meal, and are sent out to bear the good news of God in Christ Jesus to a hungry, needy world. Inside though, we wonder why God has entrusted such an important mission to people like us.

God's prophets and apostles carried the same anxieties. Isaiah declares, "I am a man of unclean lips." Paul asserts, "I am the least of the apostles, unfit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God." Peter responds to Jesus' miracle of plenty by saying, "Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!" Yet, without question, God used these flawed and fragile human beings to proclaim God's mercy and love.

In a world where we are constantly being told that we are insufficient—that we do not have enough, know enough, or matter enough—God's trust in our capacities seems imprudent, even irrational. But notice, Jesus precedes a call to discipleship with a miracle pointing to God's abundant provision, signaling that we will be given all we need.

Martin Luther writes in *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, "What I accept, I accept not on my own merits or by any right that I may personally have to it. I know that I am receiving more than a worthless one like me deserves; indeed, I have deserved the very opposite. But I claim what I claim by the right of a bequest and of another's goodness" (*Martin Luther's Basic Theological Writings*, ed. Timothy Lull [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989], p. 302).

Jesus meets us at the shorelines of our own lives, going about our daily work, and calls us to lifelong discipleship. Caught up in God's abundant grace, and fed out of that bounty, we are commissioned to go catch others.



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