Sermon on Isaiah 6 – Here Am I!

“Then one of the seraphs flew to me 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.’ 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!’”

“The Lord is my light and my salvation – whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life – of whom shall I be afraid?” Psalm 27:1.

That was my confirmation passage back on May 3rd, 1987. Hard to believe it’s been 25 years. I still remember that day like it was yesterday. Waking up and putting on my brand new suit. Combing the hair I once had. Heading over to church. Standing up front. Kneeling at the communion rail. The party afterwards. The pictures with family and friends. Sad to say, I don’t remember anything about the sermon that day. Maybe it was nerves and the other things on my mind. The end of my grade school years. The fear of high school looming off in the distance. You probably won’t remember this sermon 25 years from now. You may not even remember the guy who preached it. May you never forget the vows you make today. Confirmation vows are not to be taken lightly nor are they ever to be forgotten. May you never forget what God has done for you and what he calls you to do with your life! May God enable you to say along with Isaiah, Here Am I! I. God Saved Me! II. God Sends Me!

For the prophet Isaiah, you could say it was a day of confirmation, a day of commissioning. God was going to send him out to share His Word with people. But before he did so, he would share something special with him. God would demonstrate what he had done for him in a vivid way. Isaiah describes it this way. “In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him were seraphs, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. And they were calling to one another: “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.” At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke.” Imagine what it must have been like to stand in the presence of God with fiery angels surrounding him. Angels whose songs of praises shook the very foundations of heaven! The Hebrew word for “Holy” is “Kadosh.” I still remember one of my Hebrew professors describing it this way. “Can’t you just see and hear those angels flapping their wings in sync with their song of praise?” “Kadosh, Kadosh, Kadosh… Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord Almighty, the whole earth is full of his glory.”

Overwhelmed by the sight of it all, Isaiah thought he was a goner. “Woe to me… I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty.” Isaiah realized that God’s holiness and perfection and man’s sinfulness and imperfection cannot peacefully coexist. Isaiah confessed that he was a man of unclean lips who lived among a people of unclean lips. People who often gave lip service to God and His Word. People who often used their lips to tear down their neighbors rather than build them up. People like you and me. People who often make promises we don’t keep. On this day of confirmation, you join the ranks of many believers who have gone before you. You also run the risk of becoming a statistic as to how quickly young people leave the church, sometimes the very weekend after their confirmation.

What happens? Do some young people cross their fingers behind their backs while making their vows? I’ll be standing in front our confirmands today, so I’ll leave it up to the congregation to give me an answer on that one. Maybe that’s what we need more of. Christian congregations having the backs of their young people. Christian congregations realizing their responsibility to keep their young people growing in the faith. Think back to your own confirmation class. How many of them are still faithful and regular in church? Like you, I’m sure they had the best of intentions. Like you, they have the enemies of the devil, the world, and their own sinful flesh working against them. Like you, they also have the strength that is needed to win the victory. God’s Word provides the victory giving us the victory in Christ!

Like Isaiah, may we be the first to confess that without God, we’re goners doomed to spend an eternity in hell. Like Isaiah, may we also look to God for the cleansing he alone provides. For Isaiah, it was a live coal taken from the altar. For you, it won’t be a live coal from the altar, but it will have the same effect. As the body and blood of your
Savior in, with, and under the bread and the wine touches your lips, you also receive the assurance that, “your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for.” By Jesus, the One who lived the perfect life you couldn’t and haven’t. The One who dealt with the burning anger of others, but didn’t retaliate. The One who dealt with the searing pain of nails being driven through his hands and feet. The One who dealt with the fiery anger of his Father’s wrath and punishment for our sins. The One who suffered the flaming torment of hell so that you would never have to. The One who lived, died, and rose again to forgive all of your sins and give you the gift of eternal life in heaven. The One who sent the Holy Spirit into your hearts through Word and Sacrament to create and strengthen faith. The One who tells you, “you’re not going to die, you’re going to live with me in heaven, and until I take you there, I give you work to do. Follow me, Live for me, Share me with all people.”

Where will you be 25 years from now? Some of the people here today will be in heaven seeing God in all his glory like Isaiah so long ago. Where will the rest of us be? God only knows. Sad to say, I’ve lost touch with the people in my confirmation class. Last I heard, not many of them were going to church anymore. Jesus once asked his disciples if they were going to leave him. Peter replied, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.” May God grant you the strength to always say the same! You’re getting to an age where you’re becoming more and more responsible. Physically speaking, you feed yourself when you get hungry. Spiritually speaking, may you continue to do the same for your soul. Spend time in God’s Word. Spend time in God’s house. Maybe 25 years from now you’ll be here seeing a fresh new batch of Confirmands making their promises to the Lord. Maybe you’ll have a son or daughter who will be one of them. Do me a favor. Go up and talk to those young people. They won’t bite. Tell them what a special day this was for you. Encourage them to remain faithful to their vows. If you don’t see them around for a while, say something, do something. Drop them a card in the mail, give them a call on the phone. Tell them that they’re missed, wanted, loved, and appreciated. Support their youth group. Don’t get all riled up if they do crazy things with their hair or wear shorts to church or act all strange and goofy sometimes. Help them stay connected to Jesus and give them opportunities to do so. By God’s grace, maybe you can be a part of reversing those negative statistics when it comes to our young people. Pray that it won’t take another 25 more years before congregations see the importance of doing this.

One of the best pieces of advice that I got as a high school tutor was not to focus on being their friend. Young people have plenty of friends. They need good role models and good parents. Parents who can deal with the rolled eyes and grumbling and complaining about having to go to church. Parents who don’t give in but rather stand their ground and say along with Joshua, “as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.” To think that it all started on the day of your baptism when God said, “Fear not, I have redeemed you. I have called you by name you are mine.” Faith strengthened through time spent in God’s Word over the years. Faith confirmed today in the presence of God and many witnesses. Faith that will continue to grow as you spend time with Him in His Word and in His House until you find yourself dwelling in the house of the Lord forevermore.

So when your Savior asks, “who will go to church today?” Be the first to respond, “Here am I! Send me!” When your Savior asks, “who will spend time in my Word today?” Be the first to respond, “Here am I! Send me!” When your Savior asks, “Who will go and serve today?” Be the first to respond, “Here am I! Send me!” And when your Savior asks, “Who will share my Word today?” Be the first to respond, “Here am I! Send me!” May God’s praises resound in your hearts and lives to the point where it rocks the world! May God set your hearts on fire to set the world on fire with the fire of His love! May God grant this unto us all!

Amen.