

Epiphany 5 2/6/22
Isaiah 6:1-13 C

AND I HEARD THE VOICE OF THE LORD SAYING, “WHOM SHALL I SEND, AND WHO WILL GO FOR US?” THEN I SAID, “HERE I AM! SEND ME.”

In the year that King Uzziah died, things were not so great in Judah. Which is a little hard to believe, because when Uzziah took over as king, things were great. He sought the Lord and the Lord saw to it that Uzziah prospered. He prospered so much that when he went to war against the Philistines and the Arabians, he won. When he wanted to increase infrastructure in the land, it worked. He built cisterns and towers for the people. Agriculture boomed. The army was large and strong. And the fame of Uzziah spread all the way to the borders of Egypt. He was known to be remarkably strong king.

And then it happened. All that success, all that strength, all that fame went to his head and Uzziah started following his own ways and not the Lord's ways.

Here's a prime example of this: One day, Uzziah was in the temple and decided to burn a little incense. To you and me, as 21st-century Americans that sounds like no big deal – like maybe he just wanted to relive the 70's or something. But this was the temple and God had given quite specific instructions about how things were to be done in the temple. And that meant only the sons of Aaron could burn incense in the temple. But, Uzziah decided, “I'll do it. I'm the king. No one is going to tell me what to do.” So he just went ahead and did it. For that sin, the Lord struck him with leprosy. And that leprosy lasted until the day he died.

And that was not his only sin. As king, he was to make sure that no other gods were worshiped but the true God. But he grew lax and indifferent. He let the altars to false gods stand and the people worshiped these false gods and forgot about the Lord and rejected the Word of the Lord. And they became a people of unclean lips.

And that was pretty much the way things were in Judah in the year that King Uzziah died. In the year King Uzziah died, the calendar read 740 BC. Today, the calendar reads 2022 AD. And, the more things have changed, the more they've stayed the same.

The country in which we live is strong. In fact, it's pretty fair to say it's the envy of all the world. Agriculture, even in the midst of struggle of drought, is pretty good. We don't have food lines. Rather, most of our problem is too much food. I don't want to sound too much like a politician and talk about infrastructure, but let's be honest: you can easily drive to Bismarck, or Minot, or New York City. Yes, it was cold this past week. But, I'm guessing you had a furnace in your house that kept you pretty warm. And running water. And you have a hot water heater that made your shower nice and warm.

And all that power and all that might and all that ease goes straight to our heads. We worship -- at the altars to the false gods of ego, and money, and popularity with man, and love of earthly stuff. And, we've forgot all about the Lord and rejected the Word of the Lord. And, we've become a people of unclean lips.

In the year that King Uzziah died, the Prophet Isaiah had a vision. He saw the Lord high and lifted up. He saw the robe of the Lord filling the temple. He saw the seraphim singing out to God, "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory" (v. 3). He felt the

threshold shake and saw the smoke of the incense. And all of that made him feel his sinfulness to the marrow of his bones and he cried out,

“Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts” (v. 5)!

And, one of the seraphim flew to him with a burning coal that he had taken from the altar and touched Isaiah’s lips and said, “Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for” (v. 7).

In the year that King Uzziah died, the Lord sat upon His throne and said this, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” And the freshly-forgiven Isaiah said, “Here I am! Send me” (v. 8). So God did, He sent Isaiah to be a prophet to a people of unclean lips.

And God tells Isaiah to speak words of harsh, severe law. Notice that in our reading, God does not call them “my people, but “this people” because they rejected God and His Word and worshiped their false gods. And because they did that, their cities will be laid waste, their land will be desolate, and the Lord will remove His people from the land. And in happened in the year 578 BC, when the Babylonians invaded and this people was taken into captivity.

But, God is a God of love and grace. Even though His people will be unfaithful, He will be faithful. Even though all that will remain of His people will be a stump, God gives His people hope. And that hope is this, “The holy seed is its stump” (cf. v. 13). That Seed is the Lord Jesus Christ. That’s the Seed God spoke about in the Garden when He said to Satan, “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel” (Ge 3:15, NKJV).

God so loved this people of unclean lips that He sent His Seed, born of Mary. That Seed bore upon His body all your silly, selfish, sinful ego; all your love of earthly stuff; all the times you've rejected the Word of God; all your sin ... to the cross. There, all the wrath of God poured out on His Son, so that it would not poured out on you. His blood was shed to wash and cleanse you of all your sin. And, He died as the wages of your sin. And that Seed was buried in the dust of the earth. But, the 3rd day He rose to bring life and immortality to you, Dear Child of God.

And He gives you that life and immortality to you in Word and Sacrament.

When Isaiah was brought into the presence of God, he knew and felt his sinfulness, so he cried, "Woe is me" (v. 5). You, come here to the presence of God, as a man of unclean lips, to say,

"We confess that we are by nature sinful and unclean. We have sinned against You in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved You with out whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves."

And the coal comes from the altar of God to touch your lips,

"As a called and ordained servant of Christ, and by His authority, I therefore forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."

The coal from the altar of God comes to touch your lips,

"Take, eat; the body of Christ given into death for your sins. Take, drink; the true blood of Christ shed for the forgiveness of your sins."

In the year 2022, the Lord God sits upon His throne and says, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" And you Dear Child of God, freshly-forgiven of all your sins, answers, "Here I am! Send me" (v. 8). So God does, just as He sent Isaiah, just as He sent His only-begotten Son, as He

sent the disciples to be fishers of men, He sends you – into this people of unclean lips.

Especially at the greatest and most important mission field God has given to all of us, our kitchen table, you can tell the love of Jesus, and lead the little children into the Savior's arms by bringing them to the font of baptism, to Sunday School, to the worship services of God's House.

In the year the King Uzziah died, things were not so great, as it is in the year 2022 AD. But, we have the Seed of the Stump, Jesus.

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.