

**“Here I Am, Lord” – Isaiah 6:1-8 - Rev. Jeffrey B. Childs**

**Worshipping and Experiencing “God”** - This is the story of Isaiah being called by God to be a prophet. It seems to happen during a time of worship at the Temple. This week I have been blessed to be in worship all over the map. This week will be worshipful for me. On Wednesday George Kirk and I and several hundred people from across the Baltimore/Washington Conference will gather and each day as a part of those gatherings there will be times to worship, including an opening worship service, a memorial service to remember those who have died in the past year, and an ordination service to celebrate with those who are called into pastoral ministry.

If you go on vacation or are out of town this summer, worship and experience the presence of God in a church near you. Bring back a bulletin or other literature and share how you were greeted and welcomed. We hope to learn some best practices out there that we might use here to welcome our guests. Isaiah had a God-experience one day in worship. He was not only welcomed into the setting of worship, but he was also welcomed into the throne and the presence of God.

**Confessing and Receiving “Grace”** - Why did people go to the temple? Why do people go to church? In this short passage, two verses are devoted to praising God. Half of verse 8 is a message (maybe a sermon) and the other half the response, but four verses are devoted to the confession of sin and receiving forgiveness! In Isaiah’s day, people came to the temple out of fear that God would punish them for their sins unless they came bearing an appropriate sacrifice to be burned on the altar. Do people come to church today for the same or different reasons? What do we bring to offer to God and what are we looking for from God or wanting to receive from worship? Can you tell me why you come to worship? What is it that brings you here week after week? (Or if you are here for the first time, what brought you here today?) And can you articulate it to someone else?

**Calling and Responding “Go”** - There is no indication that Isaiah went to the temple that day to become a prophet. But the invitation was given and he responded. This sounds differently than the call of Samuel to be a prophet, when called Samuel by name. Here it may have been an open call as God asks, “Who will go?” Do you hear that call? Maybe not to be a prophet, but maybe to serve in some way. I believe to help develop followers to become disciples is to invite people to find ways to use their God-given gifts to serve God in some tangible ways. Today do you hear the call of God to use your God-given talents for God’s glory and the transformation of the world?

On this Memorial Day weekend we remember those who heard the call and went and served their country and never came home. This famous poster by James Montgomery Flagg in 1916 called millions of soldiers to sign up to joined the armed services in both World War I and World War II. This weekend we pause to remember their sacrifice. And to remember those who served and died I read a poem from WWI. I experienced the vision when I was stationed in Germany when I was in the army 45 years ago. In the spring you do not see many yellow dandelions like around here, instead you see the red poppies replicas of which you see now handed out by veterans’ groups. But here again the powerful poem:

## **In Flanders Fields**

- Lt. Colonel John McCrae, MD, Canadian Army (1872-1918)

In Flanders Fields the poppies blow  
Between the crosses row on row,  
That mark our place; and in the sky  
The larks, still bravely singing, fly  
Scarce heard amid the guns below.

We are the Dead. Short days ago  
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,  
Loved and were loved, and now we lie  
In Flanders fields.

Take up our quarrel with the foe:  
To you from failing hands we throw  
The torch; be yours to hold it high.  
If ye break faith with us who die  
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow  
In Flanders fields.

A man went to worship at a Quaker church which has a tradition of gathering together and being in an elongated silent prayer and meditation until someone hears a message to get up and share with the congregation. As a newcomer unfamiliar with this style of worship, the man leaned over to the one in prayer next to him and whispered, "When does the service begin?" To which the insightful reply came, "When the worship is over!"

An old benediction goes, "The service is ended, go in peace." Friends, I suggest for us following this lesson today is, "Worship is ended, go to serve!" The God who has called you to worship now calls you into service! Alleluia and Amen.

## **We Are Called Out by God**

Rev. Jeffrey B. Childs 5/21/24

We are called out by God to go,  
Just like Isaiah long ago,  
To address problems of today,  
May we do what we hear God say.

Isaiah went to praise the Lord,  
Feeling forgiven and restored.  
When God then asked who might be sent?  
How to serve God Isaiah went.

Again, today God asks of us,  
Who will faithfully serve Jesus?  
May we each be called as someone,  
Who will do what needs to be done.