

Here am I; Send Me!

Happy Belated Birthday! I understand you had quite the celebration last week. Yes, I am sure that by now you know that Pentecost is the Birthday of the Church. I don't know about you, but I set some goals every year on my birthday. If I have decided to look like a Lutheran or Presbyterian minister from the mid-west, I have achieved my goal. My observation of these guys showed me that the males have short hair, beards, and pot bellies. You see, most of these goals have to do with health, exercise, and the amount of weight on my body.

Well, fortunately for us, the Birthday of the Church comes with a whole different set of goals and directives. What does the Holy Spirit allow us to do each year? The Holy Spirit allows us to be re-born and to re-imagine our relationship with God. This is very similar to what Jesus tells Nicodemus, isn't it? It is also crucial for us to do this if we are going to respond with the words, "Here am I. Send me" we have to work on the re-birth and re-imagining portions.

To make this work, we have to re-establish a profound awareness of God. If we had no awareness, we certainly wouldn't be in church today. However, are we aware of God in us? Hopefully, this allows us to take better care of ourselves. Are we aware of God in creation? If we are then we do what we can to keep the earth healthy. I know that our awareness of God brought us here, but do we recognize God in the Word? Do we recognize God in each other?

In order for God to "send us" we also need to recognize that WE are here and that God is with US as well. But we have to come to terms with a few things about US. First of all, we are not perfect. We sin, we have our faults, and even though we confess and God forgives us, sometimes we go back and do it again. Oh, we are quite good about recognizing it in others, or people who do not look like us or act like us. Even the prophet Isaiah, in his weakness, looked to blame others who had "unclean lips." We need to pay attention to our own sins, faults, and weaknesses before we look to others. How can we tell God to "send us" if we aren't ready?

Part of being ready is to be able to have a generous bestowal of forgiveness. We ask God to forgive us; how many of us don't always believe that we are forgiven? In turn, we are called to forgive others who have sinned. Didn't we pray that in the Lord's Prayer this morning? "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors" can also be "Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sinned against us." Many people use the word "trespasses" as well. Harold Bryson wrote, "As soon as Isaiah became painfully aware of his sin, God began the bestowal of forgiveness. God wants to take care of the sin problem in human lives. Isaiah described it with two words: iniquity and sin. The word iniquity means "to twist." The word sin means to fall short of God's intention. Isaiah experienced the remedy with God taking away his iniquity and purging his sin. God gave a complete pardon. We need God's gracious bestowal of forgiveness.

As we stated earlier, so we must also forgive. We can then work on our willing spirit to serve God. We have talked about how we serve in many capacities. But sometimes, we can simply be in service as we

invite someone to church! “Hey, would you like to come and worship with us?” We even put it out on Facebook. I am not sure how many of you see it there or if others do, but we want others to join us. Worship is a wonderful way to encounter God!

Much like Isaiah, now we will be ready to say to God, “Here am I, send me!” We can be re-born like Nicodemus. We will be able to do our part as Christians to spread the Good News of the Kingdom or Reign of God–Father/Mother, Son/Redeemer, Holy Spirit/Sanctifier–here in greater Westfield and Southwick area. Amen!