

Our scripture readings today focus on the theme of discipleship and how God has a special way of calling us to step outside of our comfort zone, to embrace the world of possibilities rather than living within our self-imposed limitations. The word disciple is derived from the Latin word ***discipulus***, which simply means student. However, in a religious context, the word disciple takes on a much deeper meaning. The term disciple is used to describe someone who desires an intimate relationship with God and who is willing to take a leap of faith to follow Jesus.

In today's scriptures, we heard Isaiah being called to become a prophet, Paul being called to become a leader in the developing Christian communities, and Peter, being called to become a disciple of Jesus. Isaiah, Paul, and Peter, each had an encounter with the divine where they were invited to follow God in a deeper and more profound way and yet each of them responded by pointing out their own unworthiness, by providing reasons as to why they were not fit for the job.

God, however, saw something more than the human eye and didn't let them off the hook so easily. With a little reassurance, each one of them accepted their call and found the strength to rise above their own fears and feelings of inadequacy and allowed God to lead them on a new journey. Isn't that why we gather here on Sundays? Each of us in our own brokenness are seeking a relationship with God, seeking to follow God on this journey through life. Like Isaiah, Paul, and Peter, God is calling us to follow in our own unique way, but perhaps we need to ask ourselves what is holding us back from freely entering the journey.

Isaiah was a young poet, enjoying life when he had an encounter with God. Isaiah didn't want to become a prophet, I am sure he was happy with where he was in life. He was a young artist that was enjoying life and he tried to escape the call by telling God that he had unclean lips and he lived with people with unclean lips, but God brushed that fear aside by symbolically touching Isaiah's lips with a burning ember, lifting him above his shame. God then asks Isaiah a leading question – "Whom shall I send?" Freed from his self-doubt Isaiah finally found the courage to respond: "Here I am, send me."

Similarly, in our gospel reading, we witnessed the call of Peter. Jesus had already met Peter, he had eaten at Peter's house, met his family, and even cured his mother-in-law. Jesus saw something in Peter that others did not. So, when Jesus invited him to set out for deeper waters, Peter went along with it, even

though he probably believed it was a waste of time. But when Peter saw his boats nearly sink from the catch of fish, Peter saw Jesus in a new light. Peter was transformed and he fell to his knees and said; “Leave me, Lord, for I am a sinful man.”

We see this scene played out over and over in the ministry of Jesus. Jesus encountered people and touched them, transformed them. Jesus has a unique way of seeing the potential that is often hidden, not only from the eyes of the world, but also from ourselves. We saw it with Mary Magdalene and the woman at the well, we saw it when he cured the blind and lame, we saw when he called Matthew, and we saw it when he raised Lazarus from the dead. Over and over Jesus chose the broken and led them to wholeness. Jesus met people where they were in life without judgement. In the case of Peter, Jesus all but ignored Peter’s profession that he was a sinful man and invited him to leave his “baggage” behind and to follow him.

Most of us can identify with Peter, Paul, Isaiah and Mary Magdalene in that we have made mistakes in life. We may not feel worthy to stand before God, to become God’s messenger here on earth, but in God’s love we are made worthy. Just like Peter, Paul, Isaiah, Mary Magdalene, and countless others, we too should embrace the knowledge that we are made whole in God’s love. God uses our brokenness to touch others and to call us to trust in that transforming love. God calls us to leave our “baggage” behind and to allow that divine love to permeate our beings and to become the hands and feet of Christ in this world that hungers for love, for justice, and for peace.

Our readings today are meant to provide us hope. They speak to us of a God who comes to us and calls us by name, not because we are “good enough,” but because we are loved beyond measure. God can see beyond the masks we put on. God can see through the layers of living that have built up and hold us back, and God washes us clean with mercy and love. Each of us is called to become a disciple in our own unique way and we have to take the time to listen with our hearts to hear God’s call so that we can respond like Isaiah, like Paul, like Peter, like Mary Magdalene, and like the countless others who have helped build God’s kingdom here on earth.

As we approach this altar to be nourished with Christ’s own body and blood, let Jesus transform you. Let Jesus heal the areas in your life that hold you back from responding to his call with the words of Isaiah: “Here I am, Lord. Send me.”