*In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lofty, and the hem of His robe filled the Temple. Seraphs were in attendance above Him; each had six wings: with two they covered their faces, and with two they covered their feet, and with two they flew. And one called to another and said: “Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory.” The pivots on the thresholds shook at the voices of those who called, and the house filled with smoke. And I said: “Woe is me! I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, yet my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!” Then one of the seraphs flew to me, holding a live coal that had been taken from the altar with a pair of tongs. The seraph touched my mouth with it and said: “Now that this has touched your lips, your guilt has departed, and your sin is blotted out.” 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!”* Isaiah 6:1-8

*One of the scribes came near and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well he asked Him: “Which commandment is the first of all?” Jesus answered: “The first is: ‘Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is One; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ The second is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.” Then the scribe said to Him: “You are right, Teacher; you have truly said that ‘He is One, and besides Him there is no other;’ and ‘to love Him with all the heart and with all the understanding and with all the strength’ and ‘to love one’s neighbor as oneself,’ this is much more important than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.” When Jesus saw that he answered wisely, He said to him: “You are not far from the kingdom of God.” After that no one dared to ask Him any question.* Mark 12:28-34

 *In the days of the circuit riders a minister riding one afternoon came upon a man working in his field.*

 *“Fine day isn’t it?” the minister called out.*

 *“It’s fine for you,” the man replied. “All you have to do is ride around on that horse thinking about the Bible all day long, while I have to sweat here in this field and then walk home afterward. I don’t think it’s right you should have things so easy while I have to work so hard.”*

 *“On the contrary,” the minister answered, “thinking about the Bible is one of the most difficult things you can do, to prove it, I’ll give you this horse if you can think about the Bible and nothing else for one minute.”*

 *“You’re on,” said the man and immediately sat down in silence. Thirty seconds later he looked up at the minister and said: “Does that include the saddle?”*

Responding to Gods Call.

1. Isaiah is the certainly the most important of all the prophets of the Old Testament in the Jewish tradition. His name means: *“Yahweh is salvation.”* The best name he probably could have received. He was chosen by God to carry on His message to the Hebrews in the time of a great sorrow and loss. His prophecy, however, reached far more beyond his time and the time of the expansion of the Assyrian empire, which threatened Israel. Isaiah’s prophecy eventually came to fruition during the “Babylonian Exile” with the loss of Israel’s independence. Isaiah proclamation was to be a warning from God to His people for their godlessness, but in his prophecy there was also a message of *“salvation,”* not only from the *“political upheavals,”* but also from the *“captivity of sin.”* As a prophet, Isaiah encouraged not only Israel, but the entire world, and still keeps on encouraging, especially, and most certainly, the Church today.

2. When in his vision Isaiah hears God asking who would carry His message to the world, Isaiah responds: *“It is I, Lord, send me.”* Although at first Isaiah worried, which is clearly seen in his writing: *“Woe is me! I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, yet my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!”* But then he responded to God, ready to carry out the mission even though it seemed to be far too great for him to do so. Yet, he pursues the task and is widely regarded as one of the greatest, (for many even the greatest) of all the prophets of the Bible. He was called to be a prophet in a vision which, according to many scholars, probably occurred in the Temple, a very special and a very unique place. According to the Jewish belief, the Temple with the *“Holy of Hollies,”* where the *“Ark of the Covenant”* was stored, was *“filled with God’s presence.”* For the vast number of Christians the church is also the best place to communicate with God, but in reality, God was and is present everywhere in the world, not just in one, particular place, whether the Temple or the church. Yet, neither God, nor His worship are confined to a particular place or a particular time. Just as we do not have to wait until Sunday or to be in the church, to be in the presence of God, but we may worship Him wherever we are and any time we want. It is not limited to the Sunday Service only. It is our attitude and not the place that are of the utmost importance.

3. The greatest problem of many people’s relationship with God is caused by to the lack of the *“spiritual insight.”* The lack of the *“spiritual insight*” may be compared to one’s ability, or more precisely the lack of it, just like trying to understand what the sailing is all about for someone who has never set a foot on the deck of any sort of the boat, or even attempted on to being on water in some sort of a floating vessel. For someone without the *“spiritual insight”* it is difficult, if not impossible to see God, because God is visible only in the spirit and the truth. We may try to logically rationalize God, but with the reason and a logic we will never communicate with the *“spirit*” of God. Only when we open our heart to the Spirit of the Lord, only when we allow the Holy Spirit to enter our heart, we may be able to recognize God and be able to see and feel His presence. Isaiah could expect and witness God’s responses, for he was always willing to communicate with God through of his faith and trust in God. Because of his *“spiritual insight”* he was aware the miraculous ways of work of God, and he knew God will always respond to the spiritual pleas.

4. There is a joke that I believe I already shared with you in the past, which illustrates people’s lack of the *“spiritual insight.”* Hers it is: *“There was a great flood, and a man sat on a roof of his house praying to God asking for help. A helicopter passed by, and the pilot wanted the man to climb aboard but he refused saying that God will rescue him. Then the small boat came along, and the sailor asked the man to come down to the boat but again he responded: ‘No, thank you, God is going to rescue me.’ Finally a raft came by, and the fellow shouted to the man on the roof, ‘Jump in, I can save you.’ Once again the stranded fellow shouted back: “No, it’s OK, God is going to save me.” Soon the water rose above the rooftop and the man drowned. Upon meeting God he complained: ‘Why did You let me drown? I don’t understand!’ To which God replied: “I sent you a helicopter, a boat, and a raft, what more did you expect?’”* This is how many people react to God and the lifelines He offers them, refusing to accept His wishes, and what He tells them. Instead they follow their own whims, whatever they are, assured of their *“rightness.”*

5. The *“seraphim’s”* in Isaiah’s vision proclaimed: *“Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.”* It is of a great importance for us to know that we are communicating with God who is indeed *“Holy,”* for God is not our *“old war buddy,”* He is not an *“old good boy,”* or a *“jolly good fellow,”* He is not *“a man upstairs,”* as many call Him. He is our *“Holy God.”* He is the *“Almighty and Glorious”* God. We must see Him just as David did when he said: *“When I see the moon and the stars, I know who God is; when I wake in the morning I know who God is. The earth is full of His glory.”* God indeed is present everywhere and His glory is expressed by the whole creation. Even if we’d fly to the uttermost corners of the earth, or into the deep bowels of the earth, God is there. I like the way John Wayne while portraying John Chisum in the movie of the same name said: *“Sooner or later a man recognize that God was already there.”* There is no escape from God, and sooner or later everyone will have to face that reality. I’d rather accept this reality sooner than later. Just as Isiah, who standing in the presence of the Lord did, when he realized that he is a sinful man. Standing in the front of God’s altar he understood that there is nothing that might be hidden from God’s presence. The people’s phony facades, the false faces, the unclean hearts, the filthy minds, God sees them all and He is willing to remove them all. When we come into His presence He offers us a new, clean bill of health.

6. God is the only One who may truly change the life styles, the patterns, and actions of anyone’s life. Only He may change our desires to criticize others, to back bite, to behave unlovingly, to seek other’s faults rather than our own, and the list goes on and on. When we are taken care of by God, He eliminates all these harmful and ungodly traits, that we as the species possess and embrace so easily, but we must come to Him as David writes, with *“a broken and repentant heart.”* God indeed changes and modifies people’s dispositions, attitudes, and speech, when they come to Him. What people need however to realize first, is what is wrong with them, and that they want God to change them. This is probably the most difficult part because it is against our very nature to admit any form of guilt. It is much easier to pass on the blame to someone else rather than to us. Isaiah in his vision recognized that, and confessing to God what God already knew this, he said: *“Woe to me, for I am a sinful man.”* In the end God called him to be His prophet and to carry God’s message to His people.

7. Isaiah knew he was not perfect, and neither are we, yet he was chosen by God as His messenger, because he looked up to God and recognized His holiness. We are called by our Savior, Jesus Christ to look up to Him, and instead of praying: *“Thank you Lord for not being like that other man,”* to pray: *“Here am I Lord, use me as I am, even though I am a man of unclean lips and imperfect.”* Isaiah sinfulness was purged, and God had a job for him. He did not stay in the Temple but was sent to reach out to the lost, and to impact other people’s life. He was ready to fulfill God’s task and to God’s call he replied: *“Here am I. Send me.”* Isaiah was however called not to invite people to join him in the Temple, even though he was called there, but he was called to tell people to offer their lives to God, and to be obedient to God’s ways. A few weeks ago the Calvary Lutheran Church posted on their sign a message that basically said: *“If the Bible calls it a sin, it is sin, and our view is meaningless.”* Isaiah was sent to call the people to God, not to the Temple, not to the physical structure and unfortunately today, the modern Church too often tries to satisfy the whims of the society and instead of calling people to God, the Church calls people to join the *“structure.”* We are called to direct people to Jesus Christ, to be changed, to be transformed, to receive a new lease on life, in and with a new form, a new heart, a new view on life. As Isaiah we all called to respond: *“Here am I Lord, send me!”*