

Laura Muther - Senior Reflection for Friday Morning Prayer 10.9.2020

Isaiah 6:1-13

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. ² 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. ³ And one called to another and said:

“Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts;
the whole earth is full of his glory.”

⁴ The pivots[Ⓜ] on the thresholds shook at the voices of those who called, and the house filled with smoke. ⁵ 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!”

⁶ Then one of the seraphs flew to me, holding a live coal that had been taken from the altar with a pair of tongs. ⁷ 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.” ⁸ 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!” ⁹ And he said, “Go and say to this people:

‘Keep listening, but do not comprehend;
keep looking, but do not understand.’

¹⁰ Make the mind of this people dull,
and stop their ears,
and shut their eyes,
so that they may not look with their eyes,
and listen with their ears,
and comprehend with their minds,
and turn and be healed.”

¹¹ Then I said, “How long, O Lord?” And he said:

“Until cities lie waste
without inhabitant,
and houses without people,
and the land is utterly desolate;
¹² until the LORD sends everyone far away,
and vast is the emptiness in the midst of the land.

¹³ Even if a tenth part remain in it,
it will be burned again,
like a terebinth or an oak
whose stump remains standing
when it is felled.”[Ⓜ]

The holy seed is its stump.

A Call to Healing and Justice

When I think of the phrase, “Here I am! Lord, send me!” I think of the song Here I am, Lord. Which is an all-fine-and-dandy hymn about how Samuel got a great wake-up alarm in the middle of the night. He then was thrilled by the opportunity to hear the Lord’s voice rather than annoyed about being woken up in the middle of the night. However, this passage in Isaiah includes a visit from archangels and provides a different narrative about what it means to be called. If being called by God means that a live coal touches my mouth for the price of blotting out my iniquities, I’m not sure that you could count me in.

I have joked that God is not my bad boyfriend, although he has felt that way to me during times of my life. I struggle with the idea of God continually chasing me down. Frankly, that sounds like he is more of a jealous ex-boyfriend than a deity who wants the best for me. There have been many times in my life where I have fought to get something out of a relationship with God when I felt like my relationship with the church did not work. The command in Isaiah to “keep looking, but do not understand” is more representative of my relationship with God than being willing to be sleep deprived for the great cause of encountering God.

When I was looking at colleges, someone told me not to come here due to a fear that I would be too heavily influenced by an understanding of God that they did not agree with. At the time, I knew that I did not agree with beliefs instilled in me about how to respond to social issues but did not feel I had the space to make this known. In exchange for growing out of an understanding of faith that no longer fit, I have grown into my own understanding of faith. This may look different than some people’s expectations, but attending Valpo has allowed me to make my passion for social justice known. I have connected this passion in the classroom, the leadership positions I’ve had as part of the Social Action Leadership Team, and more ways than

I could have imagined. My faith may not be the foremost thing I talk about in my life, but it informs my vision of what just community and serving others can look like.

The words in Isaiah almost appear to be an advertisement for a sensory deprivation tank. After all, it mentions that only when our ears are stopped, our eyes are shut, and we do not have any idea about what's going on or how God is working in us can we be healed. Fall may be my favorite season, but this year it has brought upon me a season of life where my own need for healing has been revealed. Only when we are forced to confront the brokenness in our lives can we move forward. This passage reminds me that even feeling like we are unworthy can lead us to God. It reminds me that I am not too far gone for God to dare care to work in my life. Only God knows where I am being sent or how I will even make it through to the other side.

The pandemic has made the need for racial justice more difficult to ignore for people. Only when we lost the privilege to go wherever whenever without fear of risking what could lead to death has it clicked for more people that this freedom has not been the case for everyone, especially for Black and Indigenous people of color. The killings of Black Americans such as George Floyd, Elijah McClain, and Breonna Taylor have revealed the symptoms of systemic racism that have always surrounded us. At the end of We Matter Week, I would like to remind everyone that Black lives matter, and until all that we thought we knew is dissected can we begin to live wholly again.

I have found that it is only when we are forced to look and reflect upon what we tried to ignore that we can begin to understand the healing work necessary in ourselves and our communities. May God continue to point us to the chance to make justice out of brokenness in our world. May we be equipped with the questions and tools needed to show the active love of Christ for others where it is most needed. May we receive the richness of the glory of God even

when it means we are denied the comforts we once held dear. Let us keep looking for ways to show up for another even when we do not understand where we are being led.