

Holy Trinity Weekend (RCL/B): "Here I Am, Send Me!"

Isaiah 6:1-8

May 25-26, 2024

Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, Manasquan, NJ

"You can't just tell people they're walking around, shining like the sun." That's a quote from Thomas Merton, a 20<sup>th</sup> century Trappist monk, internationally-known author, with whom most of us don't have a lot in common except faith. In college I read his autobiography, *The Seven Storey Mountain*. When I told my Dad what I was reading, he shared that Merton was a classmate of his at Columbia University, back in the 30's. Dad described him as "Bohemian," which I didn't get at the time, but would now understand as a 1930's hippy. At some point Merton had a Damascus road experience, made a huge course correction, and joined a monastery. He was a wonderful writer, some of it pretty heady stuff, but that one quote, "You can't just tell people they're walking around, shining like the sun," is the one that sticks with me. It came to mind earlier this week, in a moment when I was overwhelmed by someone's quiet soul beauty. I thought, "Why **not**? Why **can't** we tell people they're walking around shining like the sun?"

There's wonderful religious artwork in which our Lord Jesus is surrounded by a mandala, an almond-shaped oval, so bright it's as if He's superimposed on the sun. He tells us, "*I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.*" (John 8:12) Whoever follows our Lord will be led further and further into the heart of community, where we are exposed to the Light of the World through Word & Sacrament, so that we, too, will shine with Christ-light. Think of the stars we place on the ceiling of a child's bedroom, phosphorescent so they shed a comforting glow in the dark. Sometimes they have to be **refreshed**, right? Occasionally we have to bathe them in the bright light of a flashlight or other light source. Similarly, we're like the moon that is not a

star itself, but can only reflect the light of its sun. Jesus is our Sun (S-U-N), the Source of any light we shed.

Jesus is not a stand-alone Savior. He is the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, whom we celebrate this weekend: three Persons in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier. The Trinity is a Community (capital C), like we, the people of Holy Trinity, are also a community -- of faith. This is the season of dance recitals, and there's a Greek dance word that describes the dynamic within the Holy Trinity: *perichoresis*. The Persons of the Holy Trinity relate to each other so **grace**-fully, in such a tangible, intertwined way, that "dance" is the word theologians have come up with to describe what is indescribable and unknowable.

Theirs is an outward-bound dance, though, in which they involve **us**, in such a way that the holy momentum of this community dance spins us off into the world. If we're at the end of a whip in a dance, we can be spun off into space, breathless and laughing. But when we're spun off by the momentum of the **divine** dance, our direction is **purposeful, not random**. We're sent where we're needed. Although our faith is very **personal**, it's never meant to be **private**. Remember: "Me and Jesus" isn't just bad grammar, it's bad theology. As we draw ever closer to Jesus, the hub of the holy Wheel, we are drawn closer to all the other spokes on the Wheel, the other children of God, many of whom lack what we have in such abundance: faith, family, friends, food, home, and a holy purpose in this world.

Seeing all the world's need, the voice of the Lord compassionately, urgently calls,

... *"Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?"* (Isaiah 6:8b)

Are we able to respond, *"Here I am; send me!"* (Isaiah 6:8c)? In our first lesson, Isaiah is terrified to witness the Lord on the throne, to see the angels in attendance, hear them

singing “Holy, holy, holy!” and, like the deep rumble of the organ, making the building shake, as the smoke of theophany, God-Presence, fills the worship space. His response is pretty much, “Dear Lord, get me outta here! I shouldn’t be seeing any of this! You’ve picked the wrong guy!” Here’s the paraphrase from *The Message*:

*“Doom! It’s Doomsday!  
I’m as good as dead!  
Every word I’ve ever spoken is tainted—  
blasphemous even! ...  
And here I’ve looked God in the face!”* (Isaiah 6:5)

I’m guessing at some point we’ve all felt eminently sinful and flat out unworthy to be in the Presence of the Holy. If you’ve heard the Lord’s voice calling you to serve in some way (a divine call very likely channeled through another human being), you may have responded like Isaiah, Moses (Exodus 4:10), Gideon (Judges 6:5) or Jeremiah (1:6), looking over your shoulder and saying, “Who, **me**?? You’ve got to be kidding, Lord. You’ve got the wrong person. There’s **got** to be someone more qualified than me! Please believe me, I am **not** cut out for this church stuff!” But the Holy Spirit **always** sees more potential in us than we see in ourselves, and the Holy Spirit has **definitely** given spiritual gifts **to** us, meant to be channeled **through** us to the community.

After Isaiah has nervously noted his absolute unworthiness, the Lord doesn’t contradict him. Instead, the Lord acknowledges Isaiah’s sin and grants forgiveness.

*Then one of the angel-seraphs flew to me. He held a live coal that he had taken with tongs from the altar. He touched my mouth with the coal and said,*

*“Look. This coal has touched your lips.  
Gone your guilt,  
your sins wiped out.”  
And then I heard the voice of the Master:  
“Whom shall I send?  
Who will go for us?”  
I spoke up,*

*"I'll go.  
Send me!"* (Isaiah 6:6-8)

Our hymn of the day is "Here I Am, Lord," a relatively new one that's well-loved anyway! When I ask families or individuals to choose hymns for any occasion, including weddings and funerals, "Here I Am, Lord" is in the top 5 hit parade, right up there with "Great Is Thy Faithfulness" and "Amazing Grace." Why?? It's written in the first and second person; that touches us and draws us into a holy conversation. It's a personal call, geared to the heart, not a theological statement. And I think we all at least want to **imagine** ourselves ready and willing, on high-alert, to serve the Lord and the Lord's people when called upon. It can be so much easier in **theory** than in practice, though.

This Weekend of the Holy Trinity we celebrate **the** Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier, but we also celebrate and thank God for this **particular** Holy Trinity community, our faith family. What God desires, God enables. If God has a Kingdom task that needs doing, God **calls** the people, and **provides** the talent, time and treasure needed to accomplish it. But the people have to be listening for the call, and the people have to be willing to say, *"I'll go. Send me!"*

I'm not saying we have to say "Yes" to every request, but I **am** saying that we need to consider the possibility that sometimes the Holy Spirit gives **other** people holy vision to see more in us than we see in ourselves. I'm asking you to consider the possibility that there is something you have to give that this faith family **needs** to fulfill its God-given potential and holy mission in this world. If you ask anyone who volunteers in our Life Together, they'll let you know how grateful we would **all** be for more hands to do God's work in this world. Our presence in worship is the most important gift any of us offers. But how **well** would we worship if there weren't ushers to greet, voices to undergird our song,

servants to set the altar and wash the Communion glasses, lectors to read Scripture, counters to record the offering? How, for Heaven's sake, would we nurture and keep our wonderful bounty of babies, children and youth, if there weren't teachers, youth group mentors and chaperones? How would we share the gifts of community with the homebound, hospitalized, and grieving, if it weren't for, not just our pastoral visitor, Peter, but also those of you who take it upon yourselves to make a phone call, drop off a casserole, send a card, reach out in love in any of a dozen ways to keep the connection??

I don't really believe that "You can't just tell people they're walking around, shining like the sun." **I'm telling you, you do!!** God bless you and enable you to hear the holy call to shine in your unique ways how and where you're most needed. When the Lord urgently asks, ... "*Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?*", by God's grace, may we respond, "*Here I am; send me!*" Amen

Pastor Mary Virginia Farnham