

December 11, 2005 "It's Not About Me" Isaiah 61: 1-4, 8-11 Psalm 126 1 Thessalonians 5: 16-24 John 1:6-8, 19-28

You might have heard that we live in a time that many sociologists call "The Me Generation." Everyone seems to want to do what's best for "me". It's a time when we're inundated with the idea of looking out for #1, taking care of me, doing what feels good. Too often, when we have choices to make, often our first question is, "What's in it for me? What do I have to gain from this?" Even our faith has been affected by the attitude of what's in it for me. I believe in God because God has something to offer me. We fall into the trap of this Me First Generation, this whole concept of self-importance.

When we look at the examples of Isaiah and John in our lessons this morning, we really get a different message; we understand that it's not really about me at all. You see, Isaiah and John knew who they were in God's great plan. They knew what their place was in that scheme, and they knew that their place was definitely not one of ultimate importance. They knew they were important in God's plan, but in the end, it was not about them at all.

And neither is it about you and me. We have a place in God's plan too - we are important as God's children. God loves every one of us, but ultimately, it's not about us. The message we receive, the message that we send; it's not about me and it's not about you. It's about the One who was and who is and who is to come.

When we look at the prophet Isaiah, he has a message for the people of God. He says that the spirit of the Lord is upon him because he is anointed by God. He understood that the spirit of the Lord was not upon him because of what a good man he was, not because of anything great that he had done. He hadn't in any way earned the spirit of the Lord, the spirit of the Lord was upon him because the Lord had anointed him, the Lord had done it for him, and he understood why the Lord had anointed him. The Lord anointed him to bring good news, to proclaim liberty, to comfort those who mourn. In other words, Isaiah was anointed to be a messenger. He had a message for God's people, and the message was not about him. The message was about the Lord.

Isaiah knew his place. His place was to be a messenger sent by God to bring good news to a people in need. It's not a message that says, "Look at me", it's a message that says, "Thus says the Lord."

John also had a place in God's great scheme of things, and John's place also was as a messenger. He had a message to bring to God's people- a message of the One who was to come after him. It's interesting as we see in the beginning of this Gospel, he's not identified as John the Baptist and he's not even called the forerunner of Jesus. We're told that his singular function, what he came to do was to be a witness to the Light. John is there to bring a message - to point to the One who is coming after him, to be a witness, to testify to the Light.

Maybe you see a pattern here. Isaiah was sent not to take glory or any praise for himself, but to be a messenger. John also was sent to be a messenger of God's good news to a people in need. What do you think our place might be in God's great scheme? If Isaiah was a messenger, and John was a messenger, there's a good chance that we might be messengers too.

We are sent by God to be messengers to a world in need. It's not about us. We are not the ultimate end to God's plan as much as each of us might like to think that we are. The church is here to proclaim the good news of God to a world in need. To point not to ourselves, but to the One who was and is and is to come.

It can be hard to be a voice of Good News in times like these. We hear about the rise in the spread of the Coronavirus, we feel trapped in our homes, held hostage by an invisible enemy that even makes it risky to gather in one place for worship, worship of the One who calls us to proclaim good news to the poor and freedom to the captive.

But it is precisely in this time and place that we need most to proclaim that Good News, to point the way to the One in whom our true hope lies. point to the ones who are faithful in their call to care for the sick and dying even as it takes a toll on their own well-being. Point to the miracles of medicine and science that are bringing us protection from further infection more quickly than it has ever happened before. Point to the wonders of technology that allow us to meet for worship, often in greater numbers than ever, as we look forward to filling our pews again in the near future.

And most of all, point to the One who is to come. Christmas is the perfect time to remind the world that Jesus came to save us, not from illness or poverty or hardship. It is up to us, the Church, the Body of Christ, to help our neighbors through those mortal ills. Jesus came to save us from the power of sin, to overcome the fear of death, and to open the door to everlasting life for all who believe.

No pandemic, no lockdown, no governors' orders or CDC proclamation, not even Satan himself can take away our salvation, come to us by grace through faith and the power of the Holy Spirit. Christmas is just the beginning of the story, a story that has no end because God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that whoever believes in him may have eternal life!

You see, we are a very important part of God's plan. Every one of us is loved by God; we are all children of God, created by the Father, redeemed by the Son, sanctified by the Holy Spirit. Yet the story is not about us. We are not the ultimate object of the story. We are here to cry out in the wilderness like John did. In whatever wilderness we find ourselves.

We are called as Christians to deliver a message -the message of the One who is coming to save the world. The message we bring to a world in need is so much different than the one we receive from the Me Generation, and it's a message we must declare. It points away from us and points to salvation through Jesus Christ.

Amen, come Lord Jesus!