

**Wade Street 04.02.07 11am**  
**God's Calling Isaiah 6:1-8 & Mark 1:14-20**

The Bible is packed full of incredible accounts of how God is present in the lives and experiences of ordinary people. Included in these accounts are the stories of how God calls people to particular roles or tasks. A quick mental flick through the books of the Bible results in a number of examples of people specifically called to a task by God. Abraham, Moses, Joshua, Samuel, David, Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel to name but a few. This morning we're going to focus on Isaiah and also the first disciples as we explore what it means to be called by God.

Although the calls of Isaiah and the first disciples happened in very different times and circumstances-separated by almost 800 years, and very different political climates-there are a number of common threads too. It's these common threads that I hope will help us this morning as we think about how God calls, and as we wonder whether God might be calling us too.

1. They both met the Lord

Isaiah's vision is truly awesome. Picture it in your mind if you can-the heavenly temple, with the Lord on the throne, the seraphs, bright and fiery, flying around calling out 'holy', and the shaking and the smoke, and Isaiah sitting there terrified thinking he's about to die because he's seen God, because no one can see God and live.

And then fast-forward eight centuries to a lake in Galilee. At the waters edge are groups of fishermen, some preparing to fish, some fishing, some already done for the day. Along the shore of the lake walks Jesus, and he calls to the fishermen to leave what they are doing and to follow him.

These are very different scenes, but in both, God is seen. In one he is enthroned in the heavenly temple In the other incarnate, walking on the earth as a man.

When God calls, it involves a meeting with the Lord. God does not call out of a vacuum, instead he calls out of a relationship.

The call of the first disciples might appear sudden, as if it came from nowhere, if we just focus on the account in Mark's gospel. But Mark's is a gospel of urgency and action, and his telling often just gives us the bare bones of the story. We need to go to the other gospel to have it fleshed out. So we know from the gospel of John that the disciples already had some contact with John the Baptist before they became Jesus' disciples. They had already been prepared to some extent for the call that Jesus would make on their lives.

I wonder, how do we expect to meet with God today ?

Well, not as the disciples did. That option was limited to a very few people in a brief timeslot in Palestine two thousand years ago. 99.99999999999999% of Jesus followers down through the centuries have not had that option. But we might wll meet with God as Isaiah did, in a vision, or as Paul did on the Damascus Road when he experienced a meeting with the risen Christ.

Have you ever been in a meeting with other Christians when you have known very clearly that Jesus has been present ?

Hopefully we can expect to meet with God as we pray, as we read Scripture, and as we gather together for worship.

God, by His spirit comes and touches us in ways we cannot understand or predict.

## 2. They were both changed by the meeting.

And there's absolutely no doubt that both Isaiah and the disciples were changed irrevocably by their meetings with the Lord. No one is ever the same again following a meeting with God. Of course we can pretend it isn't much, no big deal, that nothing significant has happened. We can even kick against the experience, but that doesn't stop it being life-changing.

Isaiah's meeting with God heightened his awareness of his own sin, and that of Judah's. 'I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips' But it also drew attention to the amazing forgiveness offered. 'See, this has touched your lips. Your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for.'

The touching of Isaiah's mouth with a live coal was significant. It came from the place of sacrifice, the altar, and spoke the language of atonement. Isaiah was changed in that moment.

It was also symbolic that Isaiah, who would speak God's word, should have his lips touched. We read in Jeremiah 1 as well when God called the so called weeping prophet, that He reached out his hand and touched Jeremiah's mouth. Their whole lives were changed in the instant of that encounter with God. Oh, the privilege and responsibility of being God's mouthpiece.

And what about the first disciples ? They were changed by that encounter with Jesus which led them to a new understanding of the Kingdom of God. They were changed as they began to understand what John the Baptist had been pointing to. And they were changed as they physically left behind old lives and occupations and deliberately started out on new.

When we meet with God we cannot help but be changed. Often the whole direction of our lives is altered.

As a teenager I tried dinghy sailing for a while. When I say 'tried' I mean that I spent most of the time either falling into the water or trying to get back into the boat. I remember one particular evening very clearly because I spent most of it being blown into a pile of reeds. Every time I got free and lifted the sail again, the wind would catch me unawares and I would be blown back into the reeds. I was wet and tired and very frustrated. Eventually the rescue boat spotted what was happening and I was towed out of the reeds into the open water, then suddenly the wind caught my sail and I was off in a new direction. The whole experience was transformed.

That's very much the way I see an encounter with God as being. When we meet with him, life is transformed. Suddenly we are racing off in a new, previously unimagined, direction. It was certainly transformed for the first disciples, and for the prophet Isaiah.

### 3. They both responded to the call

So the common threads running through the stories of the callings of Isaiah and the first disciples were firstly that they both saw the Lord. Secondly, both were changed by the meeting, and thirdly they both responded to the call.

Isaiah heard the voice of the Lord saying, “whom shall I send? And who will go for us?” And Isaiah responded, ‘here I am. Send me’

And to the first disciples Jesus said, ‘come follow me and I will make you fishers of men’. At once they left their nets and followed him.

It is quite possible to be called by God and to choose not to respond positively to his call. No one made Isaiah say ‘send me’. Nor did Jesus force the disciples to follow him. When I was at university a local minister came to talk to the Christian Union about calling and vocation. He described how God had called him and others he knew. As part of his talk he described a friend who had felt God was calling him to ministry, to be a vicar. But the friend had really liked his job and not wanted to leave it. He had said to God ‘no Lord. I can serve you better in this job’ A few years later he felt again that God was calling him to ministry, but again he said ‘no lord, I can serve you better in this job. And God did not call that friend again. He remained in his job and never did become a vicar.

God will not force us to follow him. There may be times when his calling seems so strong that we almost feel we cannot resist it, but we have the choice to respond or not. God does not press gang.

Responding to God’s call takes courage. Isaiah knew he was committing himself to a very tough job. The disciples were committing themselves to very much an unknown and unsecure future as they walked away from their jobs.

Responding to God and answering his call still takes courage. We don’t have to be a prophet to the nations to find God’s call on our lives a challenge. One that requires real guts as we go where we believe God is leading us.

And God’s call can come at seemingly odd times, when it really doesn’t seem to make sense. Not neatly packaged to fit where it is most convenient. The first disciples were in various states of fishing or preparing to fish. Jesus did not wait until the end of the day when everything was sorted out to walk by and say ‘follow me’. Instead he called them in the middle of their activity. Yet they still responded.

God’s call is not always convenient. But nor does it rely on us having everything sorted out first. We don’t have to have achieved or understood everything for God to use us. God calls men, women, children Those who are intellectual and those who are practical. Those mature in faith and those just starting out on the road as new believers.

So as we have thought about Isaiah and the first disciples and their experiences of calling I wonder how we have been challenged. What might God be calling us to do ? What is he saying to us this morning ?

Calling doesn't always have to be as dramatic as the experiences of Isaiah and the first disciples. I don't suppose many of us will have to address a nation. But that doesn't mean that God isn't calling us.

Maybe God is calling us this morning to a new level of commitment to him. Maybe to a specific task within the church. Maybe to a new area of work. Maybe to something as yet unknown, but we can sense his call.

Isaiah and the first disciples met God.  
They were changed by the meeting  
And they responded to God's call.

This morning lets pray that we will know and encounter God, be challenged and changed by him, and that when he calls us we will be able to respond 'here I am. Send me'.

**Wade Street Church House Group Notes 4.02.07**  
**God's Calling. Isaiah 6:1-8 & Mark1:14-20**

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There are a number of common threads that run through the stories of the calls of Isaiah and of the first disciples, despite being separated by 800 years and very different political climates.

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The disciples were led to a new understanding of the Kingdom of God. They were changed as they began to understand what John the Baptist had been pointing to.

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For Discussion.

What are the significant points for you in the accounts of the callings of Isaiah and the first disciples ? Why ?

Have you ever experienced God calling you to something ?  
If yes, how was it similar to Isaiah and to the first disciples ?  
How was it different ?

How do we *know* that God is calling us ?

What resources do we have available to test out any calling from God ?

If God is calling you to something specific at the moment, what is the next step you need to take ?