

MINNESOTA VALLEY CHURCH; February 9, 2025
5th Sunday after Epiphany; Singers: “youth” praise team

PRELUDE: Carol Gustafson/Praise Team Singers

CALL TO WORSHIP: From Psalm 138

PASTOR: I will praise you, O LORD, with all my heart;

ALL: Before the "gods" I will sing your praise.

**PASTOR: I will bow down toward your holy temple
and will praise your name**

ALL: For your love and your faithfulness,

PASTOR: For you have exalted above all things

ALL: Your name and your word.

PASTOR: When I called, you answered me;

ALL: You made me bold and stouthearted.

PASTOR: May all the kings of the earth praise you, O LORD,

ALL: When they hear the words of your mouth.

PASTOR: May they sing of the ways of the LORD,

ALL: For the glory of the LORD is great.

HYMN #134 “Holy, Holy, Holy”

PASTOR ONLY: *Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid: Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you and worthily magnify your holy name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen*

PASTOR & CONGREGATION: *We confess that we are in bondage to sin and cannot free ourselves. We have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, so that we may delight in your will and walk in your ways, to the glory of your holy name. Amen*

CHILDREN’S MESSAGE:

READER: Becky Kruse

OLD TESTAMENT LESSON: *1 Corinthians 14:12-20 So it is with you. Since you are eager to have spiritual gifts, try to excel in gifts that build up the church. 13 For this reason anyone who speaks in a tongue should pray that he may interpret what he says. 14 For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful. 15 So what shall I do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will also pray with my mind; I will sing with my spirit, but I will also sing with my mind. 16 If you are praising God with your spirit, how can one who finds himself among those who do not understand say "Amen" to your thanksgiving, since he does not know what you are saying? 17 You may be giving thanks well enough, but the other man is not edified. 18 I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you. 19 But in the church I would rather speak five intelligible words to instruct others than ten thousand words in a tongue. 20 Brothers, stop thinking like children. In regard to evil be infants, but in your thinking be adults. 21 In the Law it is written: "Through men of strange tongues and through the lips of foreigners I will speak to this people, but even then they will not listen to me," says the Lord.*

GOSPEL LESSON: *Luke 5:1-11 One day as Jesus was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret, with the people crowding around him and listening to the word of God, 2 he saw at the water's edge two boats, left there by the fishermen, who were washing their nets. 3 He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little from shore. Then he sat down and taught the people from the boat. 4 When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch." 5 Simon answered, "Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets." 6 When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break. 7 So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them, and they came and filled both boats so full that they began to sink. 8 When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, "Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!" 9 For he and all his companions were astonished at the catch of fish they had taken, 10 and so were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, Simon's partners. Then Jesus said to Simon, "Don't be afraid; from now on you will catch men." 11 So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him.*

READER: Here ends the reading of God’s Word.

CONGREGATION SINGS: God be praised, for His glad Tidings!

CONFESSION OF FAITH: I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and earth; And in Jesus Christ, His only son, our Lord; Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit; born of the virgin Mary; Suffered under Pontius Pilate; Was crucified, dead and buried; He descended into hell; The third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven; And is seated on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; From where He shall come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit; The holy Christian Church; the Communion of Saints; the Forgiveness of sins; The Resurrection of the body, And the Life everlasting. Amen

GLORIA PATRI: *Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost; As it was in the beginning, is not, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen, Amen.*

ANNOUNCEMENTS & PRAYER

PRAISE SONGS: 1 or 2 praise songs chosen by CAROL

SERMON: “LIFE CHANGING ENCOUNTERS” Isaiah 6:1-8;
Pastor Tom Olson *Grace be to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen*

TESTIMONIES: I love to hear Christian testimonies about

- Changed lives when people get saved
- Muslims accepting Jesus after meeting him in a dream
- “Near death experiences” where people see heaven
- Word of God speaking to a person in a powerful way

ENCOUNTERS: In our Gospel Lesson, Peter had a life-changing encounter with Jesus out in his fishing boat. In our Old Testament Lesson, Isaiah had a life-changing encounter with God! Many of us have had life-changing encounters with God. It is easy to backslide in my relationship with the Lord and I need a fresh one again! Let’s look at Isaiah’s encounter today...

I. A VISION OF GLORY

Isaiah 6:1-3 In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the

temple. 2 Above him were seraphs, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. 3 And they were calling to one another: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory."

CHANGED: The event that changed Isaiah’s life and propelled him into the ministry was a VISION OF GLORY. He said that HE SAW THE LORD. Let’s look more closely at what he saw:

1. The Lord was SEATED ON A THRONE: Meaning? ...He is the sovereign ruler of all things.
2. The throne was HIGH AND EXALTED: there is no other entity in the universe and greater than God. Ephesians 1:21&22 states that Jesus Christ is seated... *“far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. 22 And God placed all things under his feet”* The one I pray to is far above every earthly or spiritual power. The devil puny to Him.
3. And THE TRAIN OF HIS ROBE FILLED THE TEMPLE. He is regal. God is majestic. I expect to have spine-tingling goosebumps when I finally can see God on the throne.
4. The heavenly beings COVERED THEIR FACES. Even the sinless heavenly beings flying about him cannot bear to look at Him.
5. The three-fold HOLY, HOLY, HOLY...is proclaimed. Three means magnification. He is completely holy, extremely holy. When we encounter the holiness of God there are no words left, we are speechless. Our opening song put it well *“...perfect in power, in love and purity.”*

PERSONAL: It would be frightening, but I would like to have a vision of glory if it would help me be a deeper Christian. Other passages reinforce this VISION OF GLORY like THE TRANSFIGURATION, REVELATION chapter one and the book of Colossians.

OVERWHELMED: Sometimes things in this world seem so overwhelming. And they are. Wars, powerful people, health failures, financial failures, job challenges are so large. When life gets heavy, we need to get this fresh VISION OF GLORY.

JOB: No one ever had it harder than Job in the Old Testament. He lost his wealth, his children and his health to a Satanic attack. He understandably complained to God. WHAT CHANGED JOB? God never explained to Job what was happening. God simply revealed Himself to Job. The VISION OF GLORY that God gave to Job left him speechless. It opened up the door for his faith to be renewed and his life to be restored. A VISION OF GLORY changes everything. *One glimpse of His dear face all darkness will erase... Secondly...*

II. AN EXPERIENCE OF CLEANSING

Isaiah 6:4-7 At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke. 5 "Woe to me!" I cried. "I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty." 6 Then one of the seraphs flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. 7 With it he touched my mouth and said, "See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for."

TERRIFYING: As the holy ones cried out the whole heavenly temple shook. The area filled with smoke. As much as I want a vision of glory, it would be a terrifying thing if it should happen.

CONTRAST: All that Isaiah could do was cry out, *"Woe is me! I am ruined."* I can preach about sin all day and no one will be crushed but just get into the holy presence of God and you won't need a sermon, you will collapse under the weight of your sin.

DEMOLISHED: I think it was at the AFLC Pastor's Fall retreat that someone, perhaps Pastor Peter Franz, said that we all need to be RUINED before we can become USEFUL.

GAZA: President Trump was noting that the Gaza strip where the Palestinians live is so ruined after the war that it just needs to be bulldozed down and everything has to be rebuilt new. Before God can rebuild our lives with something worthwhile, God needs to tear down the shoddy parts of our souls. This is painful, but it is necessary.

CABIN: I have been watching a man on YouTube rebuild an old abandoned cabin in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. It looked pretty good

when he purchased it but the more he tears into it the worse it is. Inside the walls the rot and deterioration is substantial. He said that it is almost to the point where he should have just set it on fire and started over with new materials. When God wants to do a great work in our lives, He has to RUIN us before He can rebuild us properly.

FORGIVEN: Isaiah was in despair over his sins until the angel of the Lord took a pair of tongues and grabbed a hot coal from the holy altar of the Lord and touched his lips. This is the altar sprinkled with the holy blood of Jesus (Hebrews 12:24). The angel proclaimed, "YOUR GUILT IS TAKEN AWAY AND YOUR SIN ATONED FOR." This is the good news of the gospel that the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanses us from all sin.

CROSS: I don't know about you, but I need cleansing from God regularly because I sin regularly. I need to continually flee to the cross when I miss the mark.

ALTAR: Perhaps this is where you are at. Your sins have piled up in your life and you need to come to the altar. I was told that one man came to the altar in Cloquet and confessed his sins to Pastor Herb Franz and wept until there was a puddle of tears on the tile floor. That man went home changed. A farmer came up to the altar rail in Mineral Point, Wisconsin when I served there and collapsed confessing his need for cleansing. He too went home a changed man.

COME: I love these words written by James Montgomery in about 1800: *"Come in poverty and meanness, Come defiled without, within, From infection and uncleanness, From the leprosy of sin, Wash your robes and make them white, You shall walk with God in light! Come in sorrow and contrition, Wounded, impotent, and blind. Here the guilty free remission, here the troubled peace may find: Health this fountain will restore; He that drinks shall thirst no more!"*

Isaiah's LIFE-CHANGING ENCOUNTER with the holiness of God led to the cleansing of his sin...

III. A CALL TO SERVICE

Isaiah 6:8 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!"

ICE FISHING: Dick Dierks, from our country church, loves to take guys with him ice fishing. Dick was once a wild and sinful man. He now is a bold witness for Christ with a great testimony of what Jesus has done for him. He confronts these men he fishes with and asks them if they are saved. Some of them have gone to church all their lives and don't know if they are saved. Then Dick urges them to invite Jesus into their hearts to be their Lord and Savior. He is an inspiration to me of a man who had a LIFE-CHANGING ENCOUNTER WITH GOD who answered the call of God, "Who shall I send?"

PREPARED: When we have been crushed by weight of the holiness of God and cleansed by the blood of Christ from the altar of God, we have then been prepared for A CALL TO SERVICE.

TESTIMONY: We are called to be witnesses. But to be a witness you have to have something to talk about. Isaiah had a fresh testimony to tell. God asked him, "Who can I send?" Isaiah said, "Here am I, send me."

1982: On the night before Thanksgiving in 1982 God sent me into the ministry...Here I am, 42 years later, still witnessing for Jesus from this pulpit. And what an honor it is to be able to tell people about Jesus.

ONE: Probably the greatest thrill of the ministry is one on one...kneeling at the altar with just one soul who is wanting to get right with God. What an honor it was to go into my dying neighbor's hospital room in Northfield alone, one on one. He had rededicated his life to Christ a couple of years earlier. Now he was close to death and I got to have one last prayer with him and say, "See you later." What an honor to do such work.

HEAVEN: We can't keep any of our money or possessions. But the one thing we can send ahead of us into eternity are the saved souls of friends, neighbors and loved ones who have come to know Jesus.

URGENT: I feel that 2025 is our year for outreach and evangelism. I have a list in my office of ten souls I am praying for to get saved. I want to see them in heaven more than anything else. My prayer for you and me is that we have a fresh LIFE-CHANGING encounter with God that

sends us out into God's harvest field to bring in lost souls. Time may be short. Jesus may be coming back soon.

CLOSE: This week I read the testimony of a dairy farmer from Dresser, Wisconsin who took his wife's classic muscle car out for a drive. He turned on to Highway 8 heading west toward St. Croix Falls and a car came toward him in the other lane pulling a homemade trailer that came unhooked. It careened right into him and a sheet of chipboard crashed through the front window and landed in the back seat miraculously not cutting off his head. He had a real spiritual awakening from that incident.

SUMMARY: A VISION OF GLORY, FORGIVENESS OF SINS AND THE CALL TO WITNESS. This farmer was almost killed and he felt that God was calling him to be a witness so he wrote a powerful book about the return of Christ. Dick Dierks, the crusty old farmer from our country church said, "Send me." Now he uses ice fishing to witness to men. Will you say, "Here am I, send me?" Souls are ready to come to Christ through your witness of how Jesus has saved your soul and changed your life. Share your testimony today with your Superbowl guests during the half time program. *And now may the peace of God, which passes all understanding, guard your hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus. Amen*

HYMN #550 "When We See Christ"

LORD'S PRAYER: *Our Father, Who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy Name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those that trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, The power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen*

BENEDICTION

CLOSING SONG: Picked by Carol

POSTLUDE: Carol Gustafson