

I spoke a few weeks ago about having a dream or maybe a vision of something that seemed so real that you thought you were actually there taking part? Have you ever believed your dream was so real you not only could see what was taking place, but you could hear what was being said; you could smell the smells around you; you could also feel or touch those near you? Isaiah was having one of those visions.

Our passage this morning reads, "*I saw the Lord*," I looked up the Hebrew translation for "*I saw*" and it literally means, "To perceive" or "to experience." Isaiah was not just viewing the throne of God; he was there, he was experiencing all the sights; all the sounds, and all the aromas that were around the throne of God.

Can you imagine being near the throne of God? What an experience that would be, to be able to see God's throne, let alone to see God. Isaiah was not just in sight of the throne with God seated upon it he was there; he was there experiencing the whole thing. A few years ago a group from the church went to the Braves game in Atlanta, and our seats were up in the lights up behind home plate. Yes we were in the stadium at the game, and we could see everything that was taking place down on the field, but that's it.

We could not hear what the players were saying, we were too far away from them to carry on any type of conversation, but we were there. We could see, smell, and hear something, but what we heard was nothing but the cheering and screaming fans; nothing from those on the field.

Since moving south I have found that NASCAR is a way of life for many people. Probably the biggest event in NASCAR is the Daytona 500. This takes place after the culmination of Race week. I have known people to take this week off to stay at home and watch the ESPN coverage of the entire week. They sit and watch interview after interview, they watch all the mini races, they are mesmerized with coverage from the garage area, etc, etc. But a doctor friend stated that until you get up and go to Daytona, until you place yourself within that environment; until you truly experience Race week you do not, you cannot understand what it is all about. He said you must experience it not just sit and watch it.

Isaiah was so close to the throne of God he more than saw God, he heard God, and he experienced God. As I read this passage I don't see God speaking to Isaiah directly, I see God just speaking to Himself, maybe just in thought.

I don't see God speaking directly to anyone, but Isaiah's relationship with God is so close, so intimate, that he could hear God's very words. Listen as I read, "*Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?"*" How close is your relationship with God, can you hear Him talking?

It was a beautiful clear spring morning, not the type of day you would want to be at work. The kind of day better spent riding the Blue Ridge Parkway, parking at one of the overlooks with your canvass chair and a good book and a cooler of diet Green Tea. That's the kind of day it was, but unfortunately the Parkway drive was not going to happen and I found myself walking into city hall, in Laurinburg NC, for yet another mundane, day at work. But today was going to be different. As I walked into the Billing department, as I did everyday, I gave my customary morning greeting, "good morning girls." But things were different this particular morning.

This particular morning something was very different. There was the city manager, the public works director, the chief financial officer, and the manager of the consumer-billing department all in deep discussion. I was not part of the discussion, but I was close enough to

all these important people, to hear that something was wrong with our computer system and since no one there could fix it they wondered, who would take our computer to North Raleigh Street in Rocky Mount NC. This was where the computer company that maintained our system was located. It seems each one of these individuals had a legitimate reason why they could not go. I could hear them asking each other who they could get to go. I turned to one of the tellers nearby and said it's easy to get to Rocky Mount, you just take the back roads to interstate 95 and take that to highway 64 straight into Rocky Mount and I believe 64 would run right into North Raleigh Street. At that moment the city manager turned towards the teller and myself and said, "Since you know the way go gas up your truck and you can go for us."

In a matter of speaking I was volunteering to go but I was not bold enough, and my relationship was not intimate enough with those individuals to speak up. I could have been like Isaiah and stepped up and said "send me," but instead I just stayed in the background and mumbled. Sound like anyone you know?

One big difference about my volunteering compared to Isaiah's was I knew where I was going and what I was going to be doing, Isaiah did not. See, Isaiah just jumped up and cried out, "*Here I am Lord, send me.*" He put himself out there for God to use as needed without any stipulations as to what he would and/or would not do.

I could not get around God selecting him, for God heard and saw Isaiah, and without hesitation, sent him. If you asked Patricia she would tell you how one time as we were riding to Columbia I broke out in laughter for no apparent reason. She asked what was so funny and I told her I was thinking about this passage and Isaiah's request and do you what came to mind, I thought of the movie Shrek. You could imagine her surprise. For those of you who do not know Shrek was a computer animated movie, which was out a number of years ago about an ogre and a donkey that went on a quest. There is a scene in the movie where Shrek is seeking a volunteer from a very large group of characters and way in the back this donkey keeps popping up over everyone, like he is on a trampoline, yelling "pick me, pick me." And my laughter came at the thought of all the angels around God's throne and God asking "*whom shall I send,*" and Isaiah jumping up and down

yelling, “Pick me, Pick me!” The point is, Isaiah wanted to be chosen. How close is your relationship with God, and are you jumping up and down asking God to pick you or are you hiding deep within the crowd hoping to be overlooked for some current and/or new ministry that needs workers?

Isaiah wanted to be chosen to go for God, but to go where and do what? Isaiah was offering himself to God and allowing God to use him as needed. How often do you say here I am Lord send me, but this is where I want to go and these are the jobs I will do? God is not looking at our any of our abilities today; He is looking for our availability. God does not call the qualified; God qualifies the called! How close is your relationship with God, and are you willing to answer God’s call?

When you hear people say I heard the call, this call they speak of is from God, it comes only from Him, and it has nothing to do with anything they or you have done. When you hear God’s call something is required of you; silence. That’s right silence. If in your prayer life you are the only one doing the talking and you never allow God a chance to speak, then how are you going to hear God’s call?

We all need to take time out to retreat, to get away, just God and you, and we need to be silent and listen for that small still voice.

Hearing and answering the call does not necessarily mean you are going into the ministry or you going to the foreign mission field. There are many areas in which God could call you, but you have to have that intimate relationship with Him and be willing to be quiet to hear His call. How close is your relationship with God, and are you quiet enough to hear God's call?

When God calls if you have a close enough relationship with Him you can hear His voice. But just answering the call is not enough, just saying here I am Lord send me is not enough, you have got to be obedient and willing to get up and go and do what must be done, and remember, it may not be on your schedule. When you place God first, when everything, and I mean everything, is based on your relationship with God then His voice will come in loud and clear. That's what Jesus meant when He said, "*Seek ye first the kingdom of God.*"

When you seek God first your relationship will blossom like never before. If you have heard God's call and answered it then it may be time for to move out into the deep water, into the unknown, take it to a place where you are dependent upon God not yourself. What I mean by taking it out into the deep water is you need to go further, to go the extra mile.

Jesus told Peter to launch out into the deep, and every fisherman knows that the deeper the water, the bigger the fish. Am I right? One reason why we may not be reaching more people, why you may not be growing, could be because you're afraid to leave shallow waters. You want to grow as Christ's church, you want to grow beyond measure, but you're not about to leave the shallow waters and do anything about it. If you want to be blessed and I mean really blessed, you need to leave the shallow waters and launch out into the deep.

Now is the time to take yourself into the deep water. Its time to maybe start teaching, to share the knowledge which has been passed on to you. Maybe the deep water is taking a Lay Speaking class and becoming a Lay Speaker here in Landrum. We need to push out into the deep water, we need to carry our experience of God into the places

where we conduct our daily business, we need to carry our experience of God into our homes with our family, we need to carry our experience of God into our leisure and social lives, we need to carry our experience of God into our friendships. If we don't carry our experience of God to these places, or to these people, then we are, pardon the pun, floundering in shallow water.

The church is like a large ship sailing in the ocean. The ship can take us anywhere we want to go, to exciting new adventures, but the ship must stay in the deep water. If the ship comes into the shallow water it runs aground and stops, and if a ship stays grounded in the shallow water it becomes useless and rusts away.

It's time we pull up anchor and push out into the deep water. It's time to take our ship; God's church out into the deep and allow God to guide and direct us. If you have heard God's call will you join us, will you pull up your anchor and venture out into the deep waters? If you have not heard God's call on your life, then are you at least ready to become quiet with God and listen? It's time we all leave the shallows and head out into deep water.

When I say launch out into the deep I mean we need to go;

Deeper in the Word.

Deeper in our walk.

Deeper in our understanding of God.

Deeper in our love for God.

Deeper in our love for one another.

Deeper in our forgiveness of one another.

Deeper in our ministry to one another.

Deeper in our communities.

And when we all become committed and launch out into the deep, God will open up the windows of heaven and pour out His blessing upon us.

Isn't that what we want? To be richly blessed by God. Remember, we read earlier, *"Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I*

*send? And who will go for us?"* God is asking that question today;

who will go for us, who will go out into the deep waters? Are you

ready for an adventure? Then let's start jumping up and down crying

out in a loud voice, "Pick me, Pick me." And then let's all go deep.