

June 22, 2014

Here Am I. Send Me!

Isaiah 6:1-8

One of the best things that can happen to a boy in grade school is to be called upon to do a job that would allow him to get away from his desk during class time....the exception being going to the Principal's office. When the teacher asks who would like to clean the erasers there is no shortage of boys saying, "Here am I. Send me!"

We had seven young teenagers from our church join youth from three other local churches to paint, clean, build, weedwack, trim, sweep and many other things on Locust Ave this past Monday to Wednesday. They slept and had meals here (the Covenant Center became a multi-purpose room), we had the evening program each night at Life Church and showers at W&J. It was hot and the work was often hard, but nobody complained. In fact the most common comment was that it wasn't long enough. The lives of many families and individuals were touched in that one block of our city.

We truly saw our young people answer the call with "Here am I. Send me!"

However, not everybody answers that call so readily. Even some of our most revered Bible heroes struggled with God's call. Moses asked God to send someone else to confront Pharaoh, Jonah hopped a ship to go as far away as possible to Tarshish...modern day Spain...the opposite direction from where he was called to go. (That turned out rather poorly.) Paul had to get knocked to the ground and blinded for three days to get his attention. Isaiah simply said, "Here am I. Send me!"

What might it look like if we took God's call seriously? What underlying currents should be making their way through any call from God? Here are three I believe are essential:

- 1.) Stand for Truth.** We must be anchored in the Word of God. The hard part is that doing just that is gradually, but relentlessly becoming politically incorrect. Preaching certain parts of the Bible is now considered to be hate speech in some circles. In fact, arrests have been made in Canada, Sweden and Scotland along these lines. Those efforts are also in the works here in the United States.
- 2.) Love Radically.** Who is the person in your family, neighborhood, school or work that is alone and needs your touch? How was Jesus able to get "sinners" to hang out with him and even be drawn to him. The only truly perfect human being attracted people that we would call losers. They weren't put off by his holiness or felt judged. Even the woman caught in adultery was not condemned, but left feeling accepted and loved.

Let's introduce people to Jesus before we introduce them to our morality. I have felt that kind of love here at The Church of the Covenant. It's been a good fit. In spite of some difficult personal issues you have taken me in and loved me well. It feels right to be here.

3.) Get Your Assignment. What do you think God might do with you (or to you) if you truly did say, "Here am I. Send me!" Some fear he would send you to do missionary work with the Aborigines in a steamy jungle, sleeping on a straw mat and not having flush toilets. That fear has probably cut off many would-be missionaries from a joyful and fruitful ministry. God isn't in the business of bending you out of shape. You will be challenged and stretched, but not warped into something to make you miserable. Some of you will be ready to get into your assignment immediately. There could likely be a wilderness experience to forge some of you into the person God needs you to be for the assignment. In the wilderness you may feel abandoned at times or even feel you're being punished. However, every bit of it is to make you better and prepare you for some amazing work that God has for you. Some of you may just need to take some time and heal.

I have had three wilderness times in my life...each one got longer and more intense, but I know he was preparing me for an assignment each time. I've experienced brokenness and that "dark night of the soul."

God has a plan for each of you...and for this church (regardless what comes out of the GA). I want to do this with you! The level of giftedness and talent here is staggering...and I've worked with 100s of churches over the years to know that.

"Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us..." Ephesians 3:20 (NIV)

We can't even imagine what God might do if we all said "Here am I. Send me!"

Don Nixon

Director of Spiritual Development