

“Pick Me! Pick Me!”—Isaiah 6:7-8

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, “Pick Me! Pick Me!”, is Isaiah 6:7-8 → The angel *touched my mouth and said: “Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for.”* And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?” Then I said, “Here I am! Send me.” This is the text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

Many organizations are bemoaning the challenges involved with finding people to volunteer for service. Wouldn't it be nice if people would immediately say “Yes!” when asked to fill a position of leadership in the church? Wouldn't it be even better if people would actually volunteer for service in the church even before being asked?! It makes me appreciate all the more the excitement of young children when you ask them a question or tell them you need a volunteer to help. Many times hands will shoot up into the air and you'll hear the voices saying “Pick me! Pick me!” Wouldn't it be wonderful if the Lord heard us say “Pick me! Pick me!” when we encounter His call to serve Him?

It is natural for us to be rather “cautious” when asked to volunteer for something. We would like to know exactly that for which we are volunteering, what work is involved in our service and consider it in light

of the abilities and “gifts” which we feel we have to do the work. Even though it may not appear like it at times, people actually do accept tasks and positions with good intentions of fulfilling their responsibilities faithfully. When it comes to serving the Lord Jesus the dynamics in fulfilling those responsibilities become more complicated as the devil, the world and your own sinful nature strive to sabotage your service. The desire to serve **must** be based upon something and Someone more powerful than you.

Our text records what has been labeled as the “call” of Isaiah to his prophetic office. However, it is pictured more as a compelling desire on Isaiah’s part—so compelling that he seemed to “volunteer” himself for ministry saying, “Pick me! Pick me!”

In the vision which Isaiah received, he stood in the presence of the *holy . . . LORD of hosts* (i.e. Yahweh’s angel army referred to in our text as *seraphim*). It came *in the year that King Uzziah died*, in about 742 B.C.—about twenty years before the fall of the nation of Judah because of their persistence in sin. *King Uzziah* was one of Judah’s kings who was faithful to Yahweh. However, his death happened at a time when the rebellious spirit of God’s people was ever increasing. Isaiah described them in Isaiah 5:20-23 as people *who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter!* They think they *are wise in their own eyes,*

and shrewd in their own sight . . . heroes at drinking wine, and valiant men in mixing strong drink, who acquit the guilty for a bribe, and deprive the innocent of his right! Sounds rather contemporary, doesn't it?

Coming into the very presence of Yahweh will humble you to the very core of your being. It brought forth from Isaiah a response of unworthiness because of his sin. His response? *Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!* (cf. Isaiah 6:5) He may have even felt like his life was over because Yahweh had said to Moses that *man shall not see Me and live* (cf. Exodus 33:20).

Whether or not people realize it, this is the basic reason they stay away from worship, reject those who speak about Jesus and avoid any “religious” discussion which reveals their sinful hearts. The presence of God will heighten the presence of sin and, likewise, the presence of guilt in the conscience. Notice Peter's response to Jesus after experiencing the glory of God in the miracle of the great catch of fish—*he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.”* (cf. Luke 5:8) Yet, in the presence of God in His Word and Sacraments dispensed and received here is where you receive the only thing that can provide peace for the burdened conscience—forgiveness of sins.

In the midst of Isaiah's response of *Woe is me!* because of his sin, the LORD “said it all” in His actions in verse 7 of our text. The angel

*touched his mouth with a burning coal taken from Yahweh's altar and said: "Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for." Upon confession of his sin Yahweh immediately provided absolution, that is, forgiveness of his sins! This is where your guilt is taken away! As you stand in the presence of the glory of God, recognizing your **total** sinfulness in His sight and your need to be "shielded" by His forgiveness, He dwells with you according to His promise in Isaiah 57:15 → *For thus says the One Who is high and lifted up, Who inhabits eternity, Whose name is Holy: "I dwell in the high and holy place, and also with him who is of a contrite and lowly spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly, and to revive the heart of the contrite. What a wonderful promise!**

The picture given us in this vision is that of Isaiah kind of "eavesdropping" on a conversation amongst the Trinity and the heavenly host. Verse 8 of our text says: *And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?"* It is interesting that Yahweh does not just tell Isaiah that he will go to His people as His prophet. Rather, the picture is that of Isaiah being moved or motivated to offer Himself as the agent of God's message to His people. He immediately responds with *Here I am! Send me.*

It is the response of one who has just experienced the forgiveness of his sins, his burden of guilt lifted, with his spirit and heart revived and

renewed in God's grace! Such desire to serve must be motivated by the power of the Gospel because the task for which Isaiah was "volunteering" would not be easy. Isaiah was instructed to preach law against the peoples' sin which would make their hearts *dull* (i.e. insensitive to God's will because of hardheartedness), *and their ears heavy, and blind their eyes* (i.e. refusing to listen to God's Word and recognize their sin in His presence) (cf. Isaiah 6:9-10). It makes me wonder if the thought ever went through Isaiah's mind, "Maybe I should have asked exactly what this going for the LORD involved first!" Instead, Isaiah responded with *How long, O Lord?* (cf. Isaiah 6:11)

His desire to go for the LORD didn't wain even though going to people with the forgiveness of sins can be difficult. This is because when you talk about forgiveness you must talk about the seriousness of sin which causes hostility and callousness toward the blessings of forgiveness and new life which the LORD wants to bestow on all people. It involves inviting them to repent of their sins, place themselves in the mercy of God and turning from their sinful ways. At the thought of people either receiving your message favorably or rejecting it, you must be motivated to go by the power of God and the Holy Spirit working through His Word. Otherwise the temptation is there to think it's about you with thoughts of personal accomplishments or failures.

"Pick me! Pick me!" The desire to "be picked" by the LORD to go and

bring the Gospel of Jesus Christ to others happens as you experience His wonderful grace, love and forgiveness of sins daily. Through faith in Jesus for the forgiveness of your sins the Holy Spirit revives your heart and spirit. Galatians 5:6 refers to it as *faith working through love*. God's immense love for you in Jesus produces love which reaches out to others. The desire to obey His commands flows out of the love relationship which He has established with you in His perfect life, death and resurrection **for you**. It is in this context that Jesus says to us: *If you love Me, **you will** keep My commandments*. The desire for obedience and service flows naturally from a faith relationship with Jesus.

By the way . . . even in the midst of Isaiah's difficult task of having to declare God's judgment upon the sin of those rebellious people in our text, Yahweh still spoke a word of hope, referring to *The holy seed* coming from the remnant of His people (cf. Isaiah 6:13). You are the recipients of the benefits of this *holy seed*, Jesus, the Christ. While Isaiah desired to go for Yahweh with the message of this promised Savior, you too have been "picked" in your baptism with the privilege of going with the message of the Savior Who has brought the forgiveness of sins, life and salvation for all people! Amen.

*Peace be to the brothers, and love with faith,
from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

Grace be with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ

with love incorruptible.

(Ephesians 6:23-24)

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