

4th Sunday before Lent – 09/02/ 2025

Isaiah 6:1-8; I Corinthians 15:1-11; Luke 5:1-11

A Sermon by Saji Dominic

In a certain church there was a man in the choir who couldn't sing very well. The choir director suggested that he should leave the choir. Others felt he should be given more time to improve. The choir director then decided to go to the Vicar and complain. "You have got to get that man out of the choir or else I am going to resign." So the Vicar went to the man and said to him, "Perhaps you should leave the choir." "Why should I leave the choir?" the man asked. "Well", said the Vicar, "four or five people have told me you cannot sing." "That is nothing," the man replied. "forty of fifty people have told me you cannot preach!"

Today's readings contain the theme of God's call—the divine call of Isaiah, the call of St. Paul, and Jesus' call to St. Peter.

When we examine how God called Isaiah, Paul, and Peter, we can see there are several things in common in the way God called them and in the way they reacted.

God's call is always unexpected.

St. Paul was traveling to Damascus to persecute Christians when he encountered the risen Jesus and received His call. Overwhelmed by the mystery of the moment, Paul asked, "Lord, who are you?"

The Gospel presents another unexpected call - an ordinary fisherman, Simon Peter, was called by Jesus. With a simple invitation, "Follow me," Jesus changed the course of Peter's life, and Peter followed Him.

The Old Testament gives us numerous examples of God's unexpected calls. Moses was tending his sheep on Mount Sinai when God called him. The judges Gideon and Esther were also called unexpectedly to take up specific missions.

A sense of unworthiness accompanied their calls.

Each of them felt unfit for the task and initially hesitated to accept it. When Moses was called, he protested, "Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh?" Overwhelmed by God's glory, Isaiah cried out in fear. Jeremiah objected, saying, "I do not know how to speak, for I am only a child!" When Jesus called Peter, he

fell to his knees and exclaimed, “Leave me, Lord, for I am a sinful man.” Similarly, Paul, realizing his spiritual misery, was momentarily struck blind.

God responded to their fears with reassurance.

To Moses, He promised, “I will certainly be with you.” Isaiah was purified by divine fire. Jeremiah was told, “Have no fear; I am with you.” Jesus comforted Peter, saying, “Do not be afraid; from now on, you will catch men.”

Once reassured by God, they embraced their missions courageously, enduring immense trials. Isaiah responded, “Here I am. Send me,” and prophesied until the end of his life. St. Paul displayed unwavering zeal until his enemies silenced him with the sword. St. Peter remained faithful to his calling until his final moments on the cross.

Call of God continues in history. But we should keep our ears open to hear, recognize and accept it.

Our lives are a mixture of strengths and weaknesses. We certainly try to maximize our strengths, but at the same time, we may try to conceal our weaknesses so that people can better appreciate our strengths.

In our readings, we met three weak and fearful people when God called them. The prophet Isaiah recognized that he was not worthy; Paul reminded us that he was the least of the apostles; Simon Peter called himself a sinful man. Yet, knowing their fears and weaknesses, God called them to complete His mission. When they accepted His invitation, God transformed their fear and weakness into strength.

What an encouraging message for all who hear today’s readings! God chooses not only the strong but also the weak and imperfect to be messengers of His Word—something He has done throughout history. This brings great comfort to those of us who strive to be ministers and speakers of God’s Word.

When I was preparing this sermon, I reflected on my own life. At the age of fifteen, I left home and began my seminary journey. Along the way, I realized how weak, fearful, and unworthy I was for this calling. At times, I even ran away from it, not realizing that God seeks unpolished or weak people for His work. If I am standing before you today, I believe it is because He has a plan for me.

If we ask Jackie or anyone ministering in this church, they would likely share similar experiences. They received an unexpected call. Like the figures in

today's readings, they have felt fear, weakness, and unworthiness. Yet, acknowledging their unworthiness and saying yes to His call changed their lives. We see that God uses each person in a unique way for His mission.

What God desires is faithfulness so that He can equip us for His mission. Instead of rejecting people, God transforms and commissions them. This transformation happens every Sunday in this church—that is why we come to this place.

Do you know how many times in Scripture we hear God say, “Do not be afraid”? About 475 times! We should be honest about our own failures and fears so that God can shape us, restore us, and lift us up.