

2010

“Who will go for us?” (Isa 6:1-13; 1Cor 14:12)

* Dear Friends, as we gather at the church on Sundays, we do it with certain purposes. In general, they are self-centered and communion-centered purposes. For example, the joy of forgiveness of sin, the joy of staying in the presence of the invisible God, and the joy of foreknowledge are regarded as the self-centered purposes. But when the liturgical part of worship is over, God’s people go for the communion-centered purposes that we realize through giving and sharing; as St. Paul says, ... *Since you are eager to have spiritual gifts, try to excel in gifts that build up the church.* (1Cor 14:12). In other words, God wants us to serve each other by the spiritual gifts. Some Christians may think that the communion –centered purposes are optional, but it is not true to think in such a way. Today we’ve heard a wonderful message from (Isa.6) which is going to lead us to a clear vision of our vocation and help us to understand the importance of the communion-centered purposes. In addition to that we should give ear to people who serve among us by their spiritual gifts.

* First, we look at (Is 6) as a narrator who speaks about a historical event from the life of Isaiah. The narrator says that in a certain day of the year when King Uzziah passed away, the prophet Isaiah and probably some other Jews gathered in Solomon’s Temple to worship the invisible God. Suddenly the invisible God appeared to Isaiah in a visible form as the Supreme Host being praised by Seraphim. In another moment the immanent holiness of God revealed the sinful state of man’s nature that couldn’t stay before Almighty God but die in short. That is why Isaiah cried, "Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I live among a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts," (v.5).

* Please notice, this was not a confession of a regular sinner to whom God addressed six woes in the previous chapter 5, rather it was the cry of a righteous man who addressed the seventh Woe to himself. Certainly, Isaiah could have died after experiencing God’s holiness, but it was not in God’s mind to annihilate his remnant!!! Rather the Almighty appeared to the prophet with the realization of a communion-centered purpose! From Isaiah we can learn that a man who was forgiven and blessed with a prophetic gift, (v.7) also had to use this gift by serving his community, (v.8). To be fair to both sides, each of us also has been expected to reply to the following question in a positive way as would be Isaiah’s. *Then I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?" Then I said, "Here am I. Send me!,"* (Isa 6:8).

* Dear Friends, those of you who heard my last sermon may have remembered the testimony where it said that God’s people are rewarded with a certain spiritual gift. Among the extraordinary gifts referred to (1Co 12:28) the apostle mentioned ‘helping.’ Significantly ‘helping’ was given to all, though it might seem of less importance; yet it is nothing less than love itself hidden under a humble image. That is why *helping*

stands among other extraordinary gifts; it is why *helping* as the image of Love is that one without which all other gifts are useless and in vain, (1Cor 13). Truly Isaiah's "*Here am I. Send me!*," is nothing less than love appearing in humble readiness to help the community of believers. Now finding ourselves among the prophet's listeners, we should be very attentive to what he says so that the prophetic words will not come upon us as they come to people who harden their hearts.

* And God said, "*Go and tell this people: "Be ever hearing, but never understanding; be ever seeing, but never perceiving.' Make the heart of this people calloused; make their ears dull and close their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed."* (vv.9-10). Friends, after hearing these words many theologians should give credit to John Calvin's doctrine of predestination concerning the damnation of certain people. From this we may conclude that God prevents some people from asking for forgiveness and then not be saved. I think this is true, but this truth must be accepted only after viewing that all God's ways are just, faithful and upright, (Det 32:4).

* Once it was noted that none of the major or minor prophets in the Bible could compete with Isaiah's simplicity of saying God's message; his prophecies are *as simple as putting the biscuit in the basket*. *According to criticism leveled at him in (Isa 28:9-10) the prophet taught with such simplicity and clarity that scholars of his day scored him as fit only to conduct a kindergarten, (Commentary on Isaiah, by J.Alec Motyer)*. Now you may ask, how could a prophet mislead people if he avoided obscurity and complexity in saying words? The problem can be solved if we understand the psychological complexity of our nature. Thus, if people are already preoccupied with strong beliefs, then any message that contradicts their beliefs will not be accepted; even a miracle cannot help! For example, the King of Judah refused to believe Isaiah even though he was urged to ask God for a miracle, any one! *It could be as deep as Sheol or as high as heaven*, Isaiah says, (Isa 7:11). But the King didn't even listen to the prophet; he answered, "I will not ask, and I will not put the LORD to the test." (Isa 7:11-12). There are some other similar examples of unbelief in the prophetic Book. See how many Jews around us who don't believe that Moses face has not shined any more, but *Yeshua's* is shining!

* Now let us see what message Isaiah prepared for us today. Will we believe him, or will even a miracle not save us from prejudice? But at first I want to recall you the last three sermons which can be seen as God's plan of restoration of our community. From those sermons we've learned that this world is powerless to stop God from doing good for his beloved church. Rendering many thanks to Isaiah for his creative expressions of God's love in Christ Jesus, I borrowed from him the image of the spiral flying eagle hovering above an endless

horizon. Its eyes permanently rest upon a nest where young ones are left secure; it watches with one mind in the heart – to protect and bring them up.

* Significantly, (Isa 6) can be seen as it was addressed to the Jewish pre-exilic community and to the Christian community of our day. It seems to me that in spite of clarity and simplicity the messages from Isaiah and Jeremiah, as they were interpreted in the last three sermons, also were not believed by everybody. Many times I thanked God that common unbelief cannot stop Him to protect and bring up his beloved church. Hasn't the history of the Hebrew people proved the fact that Jewish skeptics of all ages have ears to hear but don't understand and they have eyes but don't perceive? The past and current days confirm the truth that God's remnant is never seized; it is cut off and planted; it is cut off and planted again until the End, (Rom 11). *Even if only a tenth of the people remain in the land, it will again be destroyed. But as the terebinth and oak leave stumps when they are cut down, so the holy seed will be the stump in the land.*" (Isa 6:13). I believe our church will be saved and restored to its golden age, O Lord help my unbelief, (Mar 9:24). Thank you, Lord. Amen.

* Reflecting again upon Isaiah's cry "*Woe is me,*" in (v.5), we want to ask him for the reason of his distress as he would have it among us. So Isaiah says, "I cried - *Woe is me-* because I did not join the chorus of angels praising God! But when my sins were taken away, I praised Holy Israel with deep reverence and fear." Friends, in response to Isaiah's lesson, let's to hear the words of the righteous man and see what is going around us. From him we have learned to not be proud, but to fear God and be reverent to His Word. In addition, we were encouraged to work out the plan of restoration of our church by love, that is a chief communion –centered purpose.

Beloved, let Jesus Christ will be glorified in giving and receiving the Promised Land.

Amen