**MInisterial Meandering**

*Here am I…*

Isaiah’s vision in chapter 6 of the book is worth a look. It tells us many things. It shows that Yahweh, who was previously regarded as the sole property of the Israelites - ***their*** God, and nobody else’s - was in fact the God of the *whole world.* The kingdoms of both Israel and Judah were still significantly influenced by the pagan populations with which they lived, primarily the Assyrians, and the king following Uzziah (after 16 years under Jotham, who was faithful to Yahweh) was Ahaz, who was rotten to the core, and encouraged the Jews to worship pagan gods again, as he was essentially a vassal king to the Assyrians.

The vision also tells us that Yahweh is *different* from the pagan gods, as in the vision the cherubim and seraphim cry ‘Holy, holy, holy!’ - but the Hebrew word they use is ‘Kadosh’, which means more than ‘holy’, it implies a differentiation - that the realm of the holy is entirely set apart from the common and mundane (of the world). As such, God is ‘Other’ - sanctified, awe-inspiring, dreadful, and terrible.

Into this smoke-filled, noisy, and terrifying place, Isaiah finds himself suddenly plunged, rooted by fear and dumbstruck. I won’t be a party-pooper and spoil the ending - go and read it! - but the point is that Isaiah finds himself almost unwittingly volunteering for something he regards himself as wholly unprepared for, when out of his lips come the words, ‘Here am I, send me.’

There have been many times in my life when I have felt those words almost dragged out of my consciousness - not even actually voiced - but inwardly screaming from me. Perhaps even when I found myself being asked to come and be your vicar! But also on occasions when I was asked to go and work in places most sensible people would not contemplate visiting, or tackling surgery that seemed hopeless from the outset. The sense of God saying, ‘If not you - then who?’, is like Jesus saying to his mother in ‘The Chosen’, ‘If not now - then when?’

What I am trying to get at is that we all need to have a sense of *mission* in our lives; God has a work for ***you*** to do - you just have to find it. I should re-write that last phrase as ‘…you ***have*** to find it’, not ‘just’ have to - because that will make you think you have all the time in the world to do it, and you can put it off for another month or two - till after the summer holidays, perhaps.

**NO!** - ***now*** is the time to be shaping up to the call of God - not tomorrow, or the day after - besides, you may not even have that time! Our need to respond is urgent and immediate - it doesn’t mean it has to be terrifying or impossible - but it calls for our response *today*. How often do we put aside God in our daily lives because He belongs to Sunday? - or Saturday, or Friday - depending on your religion. This is to miss the possibilities of God’s work and *joy* in our lives on a *daily* basis - and how stupid is that?

I was treating a dog the other day and talking to the owner, who has, in fact, four dogs and nine cats; she was telling me how much she has learned from her dogs about ‘living in the moment’. Okay, I know, we’ve all heard that phrase so much it doesn’t mean much any more to most of us - but it should. That’s *why* it’s been overworked - because it *is* true.

To my mind, then, we should be taking Isaiah’s words and applying them to our *every day*, recognising their immediacy - because when God says, ‘Go’, you don’t wait around to finish your coffee or pick up your newspaper - you ***go***. So when we say to God, ‘Here am I, send me’, it means **NOW!**

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