



**Saint John United Methodist Church**  
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**Message for October 3**  
**“Storyline: Isaiah”**  
**Speaker: Pastor Tom Grieb/Don Dugan**  
**Scripture: Isaiah 6:1-8**

## **Go Where Sent**

“*Go where sent*” is a fundamental part of the covenant United Methodist clergy make with the church. That covenant goes something like this: the church makes sure that every clergy in good standing has a place to serve. The clergy in response will go where the church sends them.

In the United Methodist Church every clergy is asked to respond to this question upon their ordination, “*Will you go where sent?*” I have always thought that the answer was either yes or no. Others don’t see it that way. Having served on the Board of Ordained Ministry I read through a ton of responses that were a lot longer than a simple yes or no.

“*Go where sent*” is not easy to live out. You lose a bit of control in the mix, which is never easy. I have been blessed to serve a number of wonderful churches, this one included. It has never been easy to leave any of them. I can remember being doubled over in the kitchen of the parsonage at Settle Memorial wanting to say “*no*” to an appointment the bishop wanted me to take. I ended up saying, “*yes,*” as painful as that was.

This morning we consider a scripture that has everything do with this “*go where sent*” stuff. It chronicles the call of Isaiah and his wonderful, faith-filled response, “*Here I am Lord. Send me.*” So, let’s hear it now. We read Isaiah 6:1-8.

## **Isaiah 6:1-8**

*In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord, high and exalted, seated on a throne; and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him were seraphim, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. And they were calling to one another:*

*“Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty;  
the whole earth is full of his glory.”*

*At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke.*

*“Woe to me!” I cried. “I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty.”*

*Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. With it he touched my mouth and said, “See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for.”*

*Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?”*

*And I said, "Here am I. Send me!"*

## **Here I Am, Send Me**

*"Here I am, send me"* is never easy if left to our own energy. When in the presence of the Lord though, it becomes much easier. We not only want to respond but need to respond.

The context of Isaiah's call was a wonderful time of worship. Isaiah found himself caught up in a scene that oozed with the majesty of God. God was seated on his throne. The heavenly host were flying all about offering their praise to God.

*"Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory."*

At the sound of their voices, the very threshold of the temple shook and was filled with smoke. It was a glorious sight indeed. In God's presence, Isaiah became aware of just how undeserving he was.

*"I am a man of unclean lips,"* he says, *"and I live among a people of unclean lips."*

In the presence of God, Isaiah was clearly contrite and could do no other, but offer his *"humble confession to Almighty God."*

Great things happen when we seek to deal with our *"hurts, habits, and hang-ups."* It's always good to get those things out of the way, and the surest way to do that is to experience God's forgiveness.

Upon Isaiah offering his confession, one of the angels flew in and touched his lips with a live coal from the altar and immediately Isaiah was absolved of his wrongdoing. Isaiah was forgiven wonderfully, powerfully, and completely, as is the case for us when we experience the forgiveness of God.

It was then that voice of God spoke. He offered two questions, *"Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?"*

Upon which Isaiah responded, *"Here I am. Send me."*

I ran across this statement the other day. It speaks wonderfully to what we are talking about today. *"Let worship be the fuel for missions flame."* True worship leads us to respond every time. That's the way it is when we find ourselves in the presence of God.

## **Ready to Respond**

Isaiah was ready to respond. He didn't ask where. He didn't consider how he would get there. He didn't consult his calendar to see **if** what the Lord was calling him to do would fit in his otherwise busy calendar. Isaiah didn't consider the costs or the sacrifice, particularly given what he had just experienced.

Isaiah didn't do what we often do.

- He didn't worry about the sacrifices he would be making.
- He didn't add up the positives and negatives.
- He didn't consider profit and loss.
- He didn't come to a decision that suited him rather than God.

Isaiah didn't say like we often say:

- *"I have better things to do."*
- *"I am way too busy."*
- *"I can always do that later."*
- Or even worse, *"I'd rather not."*

Isaiah was simply ready to respond, unlike Jonah who was willing to run from the Lord rather than do what God wanted him to do. Isaiah was ready to respond, unlike the Rich Young Ruler who couldn't give up what he had accumulated for the sake of following Jesus.

Isaiah was simply ready to respond. He trusted God for his next steps and knew that he would be blessed in doing that.

### **Yet Another Storyline**

As we mentioned last week, this present series will feature all sorts of people who are responding to God's call. Last week we heard from Scott Bartelt. Today, we hear from Don Dugan who also is responding to God's call upon his life. He too is trusting God for his next steps. Welcome, if you will, Don Dugan.

### **Don Dugan**

Pastor Tom invited me to share a little bit about my ministry story. My story will be similar, but not the same, as Scott last week. Luckily for you, it will NOT include any solo singing!

Back in the middle of 2019, I decided to take a leave of absence from GE Appliances after 29 years of service. My goal was to focus in 3 areas of my life that quite frankly needed more time – my family, my faith, and my community.

Shortly thereafter, I decided to start volunteering at HighPoint. Honestly, that wasn't after some exhaustive search. Leanne already served as both a volunteer and on the board, so I had a comfort level for the organization through her. HighPoint is a volunteer driven ministry. We serve families who are low income who have a lot of needs. HighPoint's mission is to bring wholeness to their lives by supporting and caring for them. We want them to feel God's love by relieving physical and spiritual needs, and helping them to feel accepted.

While the largest service is the food pantry (largest in Oldham County), we also operate a free clothing closet, provide Christian counseling and host Thursday night suppers with an informal church service.

Fast forward to spring of this year. During those 18 months I decided to retire (quit) from GEA and was not looking to work anywhere else. I had continued to faithfully serve with Leanne each Monday, helping cover various needs in the pantry – by the way, that is a great way to start every work week! Our Bible study – Coffee & Cliff Notes – started serving lunches one Monday every other month during drive through pantry service. I was indeed spending much more time with faith, family, and community – and it is awesome.

HighPoint had grown to the point of needing a full time operations manager. I thought and prayed about it, and the Holy Spirit was giving me a nudge, but I didn't pursue it. At the time, I didn't want to go back to a full time job, and as it turns out the timing wasn't right.

Four months later, the operations manager opened again. This time our director Ameer decided to split the role into 2 part time roles – Food Bank Manager and Facility Manager. She was hoping to attract recently retired individuals that may not need this job as their primary source of income.

While I felt a nudge the previous time from the Spirit, this time it felt more like a 2 handed shove. It was strong. This is what you need to do Don. You know the food bank operation, you know logistics, and this aligns perfectly with more time in faith and community. A great chance to respond like Isaiah : Here I am Lord. Send me.

I accepted the role as the Food Bank Manager, as did another recent retiree to cover the facility portion of the job. We started in early August and have worked great together. It is incredibly rewarding to make a small difference in the lives of hundreds each week, serving alongside Christians from many different churches, and being part of something much bigger than yourself.

How do I know what the Lord has in store for me going forward? Well, I don't. But I have learned a couple of things the last 2 years related to that. One, my life pace needs to be slow enough for me to be able to listen to the Spirit. I have more time to think, more time to listen, and more time to pray. After all, you cannot say "Here I am Lord, send me" if you don't hear the call! Second, because of that gift of time, we have more chances to say "yes" to opportunities. You never know when that yes will lead to more yes' in His kingdom work. And once that momentum starts, watch out!

### **(Pastor Tom) Your Response**

So, what's your response? God is all about leading us beyond where we are to the very places, he wants us to be. New opportunities are always on the horizon. It comes to us to respond. It comes to **you** to respond. It comes to you and me to become the hands and feet of Jesus as God calls us to go forth.

I love this story told by Anthony Compolo about a pastor friend who had a man in his church who was slow to get involved in some sort of ministry. At the encouragement of the pastor the man began to take the youth group to a neighboring retirement home.

Month after month the youth would lead worship and the man would stand at the back of the room. It was there that a man in a wheelchair would take his hand. One month the man in the wheelchair didn't show up for worship. The man wondered where he was, and the nurse told him the man was in his room and wasn't long for this earth.

The fellow went to see for himself. He found the man lying in his bed hanging on for life. The fellow took the man's hand and offered a prayer. Upon saying, "*amen*," the man hanging on for dear life squeezed his hand, and his visitor was overcome with emotion.

The nurse told him, "*He's been waiting for you. He said he didn't want to die until Jesus came and held his hand. I tried to tell him that he would soon have a chance to meet Jesus and talk to him, and even be able to hold his hand.*"

But the fellow said, "*No. Once a month Jesus comes and holds my hand and I don't want to leave until I have a chance to hold that hand one more time.*"

*"Whom shall I send? And who will go for us."*

*"Here I am. Send me."*