

Isaiah 6:1-8 (9 - 13)  
Psalm 138  
1 Corinthians 15:1-11  
Luke 5:1-11

### **Notes on the Old Testament Lesson**

This call of Isaiah to be a prophet is one of the most well-known and much-beloved selections of scripture. The vivid imagery and the simple, yet faithful, response of the prophet are incredibly moving. However, our familiarity with the passage often keeps us from hearing and seeing much that can add to our appreciation of its power.

Isaiah was a priest serving in Solomon's Temple. Uzziah's reign lasted from approximately 767 to 739 B.C. Isaiah served as a prophet for many years during the reign of Hezekiah (who ruled from 728 - 699 B.C.) so when this event occurred, in about 739, Isaiah must have been a relatively young man.

Isaiah's statement, "I saw the LORD" is in itself amazing. Remember that no one can see the LORD and live (Exodus 33:20). He states that the LORD's train "filled the Temple". Although there is disagreement among scholars as to the exact size of Solomon's Temple, the minimum height would have been thirty cubits, or about fifty two feet. Nothing about this vision is subtle or understated. Around the LORD flew seraphs (or seraphim). Far from being the cute and cuddly angels from medieval and modern paintings, seraphs (literally "the burning ones") were fiery, flying serpents (Isaiah 14:29, 30:6, and others). The seraphim covered their faces because not even they could look on the LORD and live.

No wonder Isaiah cried, "Woe is me! I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; yet my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!" He must have surely thought that he would be struck down at any moment. Yet, that is not what happens. After the seraph purifies him by fire, Isaiah receives - and answers - the call to prophetic ministry.

This week's Lectionary gives the option of stopping with verse 8 (Isaiah's answer of "Send me.") or going on through verse 13. It is important to not stop at verse 8 but to hear God's next words to Isaiah. In effect, he says that although Isaiah will bring God's words to the people, the people will refuse to hear them. How discouraging that must have been! Even so, Isaiah is to do as God has instructed. Although Isaiah's words did not prevent Judah's destruction, they have inspired millions of God's people, even to this very day.

### **Notes on the Epistle Lesson**

Many of us do not realize the historical significance of this passage from 1 Corinthians. As Paul's Corinthian correspondence was written in the early to middle 50's while the four gospels were written between A.D. 70 and 100, this passage is the earliest written account of Jesus' resurrection available to us.

It is significant that Paul was not aware of many of the events that took place between the Resurrection and the Ascension. Many people today do not realize that since Paul's ministry preceded the writing of the Gospels, there were many events in Jesus' life and ministry of which he never knew. Hopefully, this can inspire modern Christians. After all, they know more about what Jesus said and did than did the Apostle Paul - and look at what he was able, with God's help, to accomplish.

### Notes on the Gospel Lesson

The many villages around the Sea of Galilee (referred to in this passage as the lake of Gennesaret) each had designated areas in which to fish and to harbor their boats. The area used by the fishermen of Capernaum, where Peter lived, is today known as Tabgha. This name is a corruption of the name *Heptapegon*, which means "seven springs". There are seven springs immediately north of the lake. Although the water from these springs is today diverted around the Sea of Galilee as it is not potable, in the first century the water ran into the lake. It is believed that fishermen would use this water as if it were a faucet to clean their nets, the task they were doing at the beginning of this passage.

The bottom of a first century fishing boat was discovered on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee in 1986. It was compared to contemporary literary descriptions and to the one mosaic image of a fishing boat of the time and was found to be a typical fishing boat. The preserved boat has allowed scholars to build models of how the boat would have appeared when it rode the waters of the lake (see photos at right). These are small boats and could only hold four to six occupants. Mark 4:36 indicates that it took at least three boats to take Jesus and the disciples across the lake.

Notice that Simon (Peter) says that the fishermen had fished "all night". To this day fishing on the Sea of Galilee is done at night. The lake is extremely deep and the fish swim to the lower depths during the day to escape the sun's heat. Only at night are they found near the surface in sufficient numbers for commercial fishermen of the first and the twenty first centuries.

