

## **1 Corinthians 15:1-11**

I would remind you, brothers and sisters, of the good news that I proclaimed to you, which you in turn received, in which also you stand, through which also you are being saved, if you hold firmly to the message that I proclaimed to you--unless you have come to believe in vain. For I handed on to you as of first importance what I in turn had received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers and sisters at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. For I am the least of the apostles, unfit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me has not been in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them--though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me. Whether then it was I or they, so we proclaim and so you have come to believe.

## **Luke 5:1-11**

Once while Jesus was standing beside the lake of Gennesaret, and the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, he saw two boats there at the shore of the lake; the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little way from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the crowds from the boat. When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch." Simon answered, "Master, we have worked all night long but have caught nothing. Yet if you say so, I will let down the nets." When they had done this, they caught so many fish that their nets were beginning to break. So they signalled their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both boats, so that they began to sink. But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!" For he and all who were with him were amazed at the catch of fish that they had taken; and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who are partners with Simon. Then Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people." When they had brought their boats to shore, they left everything and followed him.

## **COCU13C Readings**

Here are some insights to explore from the readings this week:

\* Holiness is not a withdrawal from the world, but a discovery, an encounter in the midst of life with something, someone totally awesome in the old-fashioned meaning of that trivialised word. With Isaiah it happened during worship. With Peter it happened as God met him at the point of his strength, fishing. With Paul it happened when he was on the way to do something wicked. With the psalmist it seems to be a natural reaction to the greatness of God, a sense of wonder and awe, and an amazement that even if God is like this, God still has time for the likes of us.

\* What is the touchstone of true belief? What is the character of God, shown in all four passages?

\* 'Temple' in the Old Testament is the place where God is found, the holy place. Usually that is the tabernacle or temple. But behind that lies the idea that the whole cosmos was made to be the temple of God, something which can be found from Genesis to Revelation, and makes even more striking the teaching that the body of Jesus, and even our own bodies, are the temple of God (John 1:21, 1 Corinthians 6:19). Psalm 138:2 could be used as a text, with the Isaiah passage talking about a physical temple, Paul talking about what happened to the body of Jesus, and Luke talking about a creation miracle. How do we 'bow down' when we think about the temple of God in all these senses?

\* What does it mean to take God at God's word? Luke 5:5, where Peter says, "If you say so ...", Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:2, "If you hold firmly to the message ...", Isaiah responding "Here I am, send me!" The psalmist is convinced that God's name and God's word are higher than anything (Psalm 138:2).

*(Reflections from 'Starters for Sunday')*

### **Psalm 138**

I give you thanks, O LORD, with my whole heart;

**before the gods I sing your praise.**

**I bow down toward your holy temple and give thanks**

**to your name for your steadfast love and your faithfulness;**

for you have exalted your name and your word above everything.

On the day I called, you answered me,

you increased my strength of soul.

All the kings of the earth shall praise you, O LORD,

**for they have heard the words of your mouth.**

They shall sing of the ways of the LORD,

**for great is the glory of the LORD.**

**For though the LORD is high, God regards the lowly;**

but the haughty God perceives from far away.

**Though I walk in the midst of trouble,**

**you preserve me against the wrath of my enemies;**

you stretch out your hand, and your right hand delivers me.

The LORD will fulfil God's purpose for me;

**your steadfast love, O LORD, endures forever.**

**Do not forsake the work of your hands.**

When we use a psalm in worship, we are saying in effect, "Here is a poem that has blessed God's people and helped them express their sorrow, their questions, their praise and thanksgiving, even if I do not always know how and for whom this will be the case today." Today's psalm is full of memorable verses. It begins with 4 verbs: give thanks, make music, bow down, give thanks. The second 'give thanks' in Hebrew is stronger than the first, a growing determination to exalt this God. At least three convictions follow, continuing this build-up of praise and faith:

- God made us stronger by answering prayer
- God pays attention to the lowly
- God protect us from enemies
- God will fulfil God's purpose for me

The psalm ends with a simple, heartfelt prayer: "Do not forsake the work of your hands."

### **Isaiah 6:1-8, (9-13)**

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lofty; and the hem of his robe filled the temple. Seraphs were in attendance above him; each had six wings: with two they covered their faces, and with two they covered their feet, and with two they flew. And one called to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of God's glory." The pivots on the thresholds shook at the voices of those who called, and the house filled with smoke. And I said: "Woe is me! I am lost, for I am a person of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; yet my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!" Then one of the seraphs flew to me, holding a live coal that had been taken from the altar with a pair of tongs. The seraph touched my mouth with it and said: "Now that this has touched your lips, your guilt has departed and your sin is blotted out." 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!" And God said, "Go and say to this people: 'Keep listening, but do not comprehend; keep looking, but do not understand.' Make the mind of this people dull, and stop their ears, and shut their eyes, so that they may not look with their eyes, and listen with their ears, and comprehend with their minds, and turn and be healed." Then I said, "How long, O Lord?" And he said: "Until cities lie waste without inhabitant, and houses without people, and the land is utterly desolate; until the LORD sends everyone far away, and vast is the emptiness in the midst of the land. Even if a tenth part remain in it, it will be burned again, like a terebinth or an oak whose stump remains standing when it is felled." The holy seed is its stump.

Uzziah ruled for 40 years. When he died in 736 BCE, things began to fall apart. That was also the year of Isaiah's call through a vision in the temple. While later on, seraphim (Hebrew plural of 'seraph') and cherubim became names for lofty angels, at this point a seraph was an image like a small sphinx, part human, part animal, with six wings – put into the temple at the insistence of the king of Assyria, who was Uzziah's overlord. That did not prevent God, the overlord of all kings and armies ('hosts'), from using seraphim to speak to God's prophet. The the passage has three key features:

1. Human dismay at the holiness of God – even a prophet recognises they are unclean even at the point of their strength and speech
2. The desire of God to forgive sin and heal our sense of unworthiness
3. The difficult nature of Isaiah's call