

Gaines Congregational United Church of Christ

February 10, 2019

Old Testament Reading; Isaiah 6: 1-8

Responsive Reading; Psalm 138

Epistle Reading; 1 Corinthians 15: 1-11

Gospel Reading; Luke 5: 1-11

Sermon Title: WE DELIVER THAT WHICH WE HAVE RECEIVED

By Rev. Jim Gardner

Summary: You can't give what you ain't got, and if you did not get it from God it ain't worth giving.

In our Old Testament reading Isaiah recognizes his inadequacy and says, "Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, The Lord of hosts."

Then one of the seraphim flew to him with a hot coal from the altar and touched his lips with it and said, "Behold, this has touched your lips; Your iniquity is taken away, and your sin purged."

Then God said, “Whom shall I send, And who will go for Us?”

To which Isaiah replies, “Here am I! Send me.”

In the Gospel lesson Peter reacts to the huge catch of fish that he feels can only be attributed to God. He falls at the knees of Jesus and says, “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!”

In the Epistle, Paul also recognizes his limitations. Paul says, “Then, last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time. For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle.”

When a prophet, or a minister or any other man of God appears to taking credit for words instead of giving credit where credit is due, i.e. to God, he or she will be challenged. Even Jesus came under this scrutiny.

In Matthew 13: 54 -57 we read, ‘When he had come to his own country, He taught in the synagogue, so that they were astonished and said, “Where did this Man get this wisdom and these mighty works? Is this not the carpenter’s son? Is not his mother called Mary? And His brothers James, Joses, Simon, and Judas? And His sisters, are they not all with us? Where did this Man get all these things?” So, they were offended at him. But Jesus said

to them, “A prophet is not without honor except in his own country and in his own house.”

They were so busy recognizing the kid next door that they could not recognize the Son of God.

I too have fallen under this scrutiny. I am here today as an ordained pastor because when I was seeking acceptance as a Commissioned Lay Pastor, I preached a sermon called PROPHETS WITHOUT HONOR on this scripture. When done the examining committee asked me where I got the authority to preach this sermon. I was left speechless. I do not have any authority except that which I receive from God. I ascribe to the words of 2nd Corinthians 3: 5&6. “Not that we are competent of ourselves to claim anything as coming from us; our competence is from God who has made us competent to be ministers of a new covenant, not of letter but of spirit; for the letter kills but the Spirit gives life.”

I was rejected by the committee so I sought and found a mentor that enabled me to be ordained by the American Evangelical Christian Church.

I am forever indebted to that committee for I have found out that often those who hurt you do you more good than those that pat you on the back.

Isaiah, Paul and even Jesus made sure that God got the credit. Isaiah admitted to being a “man of unclean lips.”

Paul gave credit by saying, “But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I but the grace of God which was with me.”

Jesus prayed to the father and said that “Thy will be done.” And, “I go to the Father, and if I go to the Father I will return and receive you unto myself.” Even Jesus who said, “I am in the Father and the Father is in me” gave God top billing.

Now I ask you, how can we do any less. Everything that we have and hold dear is from the Father.

If you have been following Don’s blog, entitled “As I See It” you have seen that forgiveness is both a treasure given to us by God and also our most important responsibility given to us by God. Forgiveness is a gift that directly connects us to the will of God.

We hear that “We love because God first loved us” or “God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son.” And we all know the words from the cross, “Father forgive them for they know not what they do”, and, “Forgive our debts as we forgive our debtors”.

Jesus also said, “If you love me you will keep my commandments. I give you a new commandment, Love others as I have loved you.”

God has given us every single thing we have including our very lives, “I was wonderfully created in my mother’s womb.” God has given us everything AND a blue print by which we may live in harmony with him.

This sermon is not my sermon for I only deliver that which I have received.

To God be the Glory and I will be happy to take any blame, for I know that God is Good All the Time and that God’s got this.

Hallelujah and Amen.