

Sermon 060621 Revised

When Americans answer the telephone, most of us simply say, "Hello." I understand, however, that responses are a bit different in other countries.

- Germans answer a ringing phone with their last name.

- In Denmark, the Danes will answer with both their first and last names.

- Russians say, "I'm listening."

- The curious French say, "Hello, who's on the line?"

- Italians greet callers with "Ready" upon which the caller demands, "Who's speaking?"

- The Spanish give the command, "Speak!"

- The Chinese proclaim, "Hey, hey, who are you?"

Pause

Just as there are different ways of answering phone calls, there are also different ways to answering a call from God.

God has called and continues to call each of us. We are all "called to be saints" called "according to God's own purposes and grace" (2 Timothy 1:9).

But like answering the phone.... We all have different ways of answering when we are called by God.

Moses answered God's call by saying, "Who am I to be called by God?" (Exodus 3:11). Gideon answered, "But I am the least in my father's house." (Judges 6:15). Zechariah answered, "How shall I know this is a call from God?" (Luke 1:18). Isaiah answered, "Here am I. Send me." (Isaiah 6:8).

So how will you answer and how will I answer God's call in our lives.

God's call is a call that demands much from us.... (God calls asking for nothing less than everything you have), but it is a call that offers the presence of God in your life as you fulfill your calling.

The question ... is..is..."Will you answer God's call?" "Will you be the man or woman of God that He has called you to be? Are you willing to accept

the responsibility that God has laid on you?” So how will you and I answer?

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In today’s text we hear the story of God calling Isaiah and we hear Isaiah’s response.., “Here, I am, Lord... here I am..Send me!”

Which leads us to the question how might you and I... how might we respond to this question?

In our scripture today, Isaiah, the prophet has a vision... and a pretty frightening one at that. Flaming creatures were flying overhead ...and God was shouting... “Holy, Holy, Holy... Lord all power... the earth is filled with your glory. It was terrifying and Isaiah was sure he was doomed..... a sense of his sinfulness overwhelmed him as he cried out, “woe is me... I am doomed...I am ruined... how can I stand before the lord....

Yet in that very moment God... the Lord All Powerfultouches Isaiah and says...’your sins are forgiven’ and God follows us with.. “Is there anyone I can send... will someone go for me...whom shall I send... whom shall I send? And in what seems to be a change of heart, Isaiah goes from panic .. he goes from apprehension to acceptance to acquiescence. “Send me”... he says to God... “send me”

And who of us... like Isaiah.. would NOT have said yes.... Who of us ...having stood in the presence of God... would not have said yes to the Lord almighty...if we were to have stood in the presence of the God the all powerful and have been plunked down in the midst of the omnipotent and omnipresent Lord. PAUSE

One can only imagine this experience of God's presence. And when you and I stand before the Lord... when we have this awe inspiring encounter with God Almighty... you and I... can be... you and I would be obliged... and induced and coerced to answer, "Here I am Lord!" PAUSE

It seems to me that answering God's call is a 2 part thing. First ...in some way or another... we must first experience the awe of God and it is that awe that inspires us and enables us to follow God. REPEAT.

awe is a sense of the holiness of an event... a sight or an experience that opens us up to God's greatness.. an emotion which pulls our attention off ourselves and onto something much larger than we.

Frederick Buechner tells a story of seeing a forest of giant redwoods for the first time. There were some small children nearby, giggling and chattering and pushing each other around. Nobody had to tell them to quiet down as we entered. They quieted down all by themselves. Everybody did. You couldn't hear a sound of any kind. It was like coming into a vast, empty room.

Two or three hundred feet high the redwoods stood. You had to crane your neck back as far as it would go to see the leaves at the top. The trees made their own twilight out of the bright California day. There was a stillness and stateliness about them that seemed to become part of you as you stood there stunned by the sight of them. They had been growing in that place for going on two thousand years. With infinite care they were growing even now. You could feel them doing it. They made you realize that all your life you had been mistaken. Oaks and ashes, maples and chestnuts and elms you had seen for as long as you could remember, but never until this moment had you so much as dreamed what a Tree really was. (Frederick Buechner, "Whistling in the Dark", 10/29/89, retrieved 05/25/21). He goes on to say that the kids probably didn't have the life experience to understand that what they were experiencing was awe.

One author puts it this way, "Awe is a self-transcendence emotion because it focuses our attention away from ourselves and present circumstances and world and towards our environment...(Ibid) REPEAT
When you and I experience awe, it is a paradigm shift from "it's all about me" to "the world is larger than me and even to "this is God's world." (Ibid.) **pause**

God uses various ways and paths to come into our hearts ...and awe is certainly one of them... when we are struck by the magnificence of god's creation, our lives can open up to God.... just as would the pedals of a flower unfolding in the morning.

When we are struck by the realization that life is NOT all about us... yet we have a place in it... we, like Isaiahcan say, "Here I am, Lord." REPEAT

When Isaiah experiences his "calling" he comes to the realization that life is way larger... God is much greater than he ever imagined and that he is called to something much bigger than himself and his circumstances... and that in spite of his imperfections... he can.. and he does becomes an instrument of God.

Sometimes I think we Christians expect way too little from God... we see the world as flat and uninspiring. We never fully open our lives to those places of divine revelation... places we can experience God...

Maybe like Annie Dillard says... "when we go to church ... or anywhere in life...we should wear crash helmets, receive life preservers and be lashed to the pews... just in case God shows up (Bruce G. Epperly, *Christian Century*, 1/26/10) repeat

And we remember that our lives are not all about us... we are about a larger thing called Life. We are not our own.” (Parker J. Palmer, *Let your Life Speak: Listening for the Voice of Vocation* Jossey-Bass: 2000) 2-3). *WE belong to God*

Awe leads us to.. awe is a pathway to God. And God intentionally fills our world with things of wonderment and awe... God intentionally loaded the world with amazing things to leave you astounded. The carefully air-conditioned termite mound in Africa, the tart crunchiness of an apple, the explosion of thunder, the beauty of an orchid, the interdependent systems of the human body, the inexhaustible pounding of the ocean waves, and thousands of other created sights, sounds, touches, and tastes—God designed all to be awesome. And he intended us to be daily astounded, astonished and astonished as we lived in God’s awe-inspiring creation.

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Your Sense of Awe will Shape Your Life. It will shape the direction of your life. It just makes sense that your source of awe will control you, your decisions, and the course your story takes. If you live in awe of material things, for example, you will spend lots of money acquiring a pile of material stuff; to afford your ever-increasing pile, you will have to work a lot.

You will also tend to attach your identity and inner sense of peace to material possessions, spending way too much time collecting and maintaining them. If material things are your awe source, you will neglect other things of value and won't ever be fully satisfied, because these material things just don't have the capacity to satisfy your awe-longing heart. Yes, your house will be big, your car will be luxurious, and you will be surrounded with beautiful things, but your contentment in areas that really count will be small.

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But if you recognize and realize that God is the source of all things beautiful and amazing, then your world will open up.

Franz Joseph Haydn (1732-1809) was present at the Vienna Music Hall, where his oratorio *The Creation* was being performed. Weakened by age, the great composer was confined to a wheelchair. As the majestic work moved along, the audience was caught up with tremendous emotion of the piece..... When the passage "And there was light!" was reached, the chorus and orchestra burst forth in such power that the crowd could no

longer restrain its enthusiasm. The vast assembly rose in spontaneous applause.

Haydn struggled to stand and motioned for silence. With his hand pointed toward heaven, he said, "No, no, not from me, but from thence comes all!" Having given the glory and praise to the Creator, he fell back into his chair exhausted. (Daily Bread, 9/29/1992)

We, like Haydn.... Need to recognize not only that all comes from God but that it is God who inspires us...who puts us in awe of God, himself or herself and the universe.. that reminds us that all we have and all we are ...it is all a gift...and we need to recognize that gift.

And we remember that we can get so wrapped in the mundane and worldly things that we don't see... and we miss the awe inspiring gifts of God...

PAUSE

There is a wonderful story about

Sherlock Holmes and Dr Watson. It seems they were going camping. They pitch their tent under the stars and go to sleep. In the middle of the night Holmes wakes Watson up: "Watson, look up at the stars, and tell me what you deduce."

Watson: "I see millions of stars and even if a few of those have planets, it's quite likely there are some planets like Earth, and if there are a few planets like Earth out there, there might also be life."

To which Holmes replies: "Watson, you idiot, somebody's stolen our tent!"

(Geoff Anandappa, *The Pastor's Workshop*, retrieved 5/25/21)

We have a choice... we can be Holmes.... w sees only the mundane or really can be open to the awe and glory of God

And when we are open to God's majesty... especially the awe of nature which is all around us... we can also become more aware that we are part of God's grand plan.... No matter how small our part might be. You and i... we don't have figure it all out.. we don't have to fix everything... to do life by itself...God just wants us to participate in this life... to find our niche in it .. we just need to keep our heads up... open to God's awe... open to God's calling... ready to say, "Here I am, Lord, Here I am>"