

Chaplain Tim Morehouse

A Reading from the 6th Chapter of the Book of the Prophet Isaiah, beginning at the 1st Verse:

In the year of King Uzziah's death, I saw the Lord sitting on a high and exalted throne, the edges of his robe filling the temple. Winged creatures were stationed around him. Each had six wings: with two they veiled their faces, with two their feet, and with two they flew about. They shouted to each other, saying:

“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of heavenly forces!

All the earth is filled with God's glory!”

The doorframe shook at the sound of their shouting, and the house was filled with smoke.

I said, “Mourn for me; I'm ruined! I'm a man with unclean lips, and I live among a people with unclean lips. Yet I've seen the king, the Lord of heavenly forces!”

Then one of the winged creatures flew to me, holding a glowing coal that he had taken from the altar with tongs. He touched my mouth and said, “See, this has touched your lips. Your guilt has departed, and your sin is removed.”

Then I heard the Lord's voice saying, “Whom should I send, and who will go for us?”

I said, “I'm here; send me.”

A Reading from the 4th Chapter of the Gospel According to Mark, beginning at the 30th Verse:

Jesus continued, “What's a good image for God's kingdom? What parable can I use to explain it?

Consider a mustard seed. When scattered on the ground, it's the smallest of all the seeds on the earth; but when it's planted, it grows and becomes the largest of all vegetable plants. It produces such large branches that the birds in the sky are able to nest in its shade.”

## Homily

Much like the call to be a Prophet, the call to Teach, Coach, Nurse, Administrate or support our school in any other way can come with an approach that fills us with dread...

...or if not dread immediately, the call can instead start with unknowing curiosity, turn into willingness and then convert itself to dread when the students show up for the first day! That's TOMORROW! We can hear it now...

The doorframe shook at the sound of their shouting, and the house was filled with smoke.

I said, "Mourn for me; I'm ruined! I'm merely a human with unclean lips, and I live among a people with unclean lips. Yet I've seen the king, the Lord of heavenly forces!"

Then one of the winged creatures flew to me, holding a glowing coal that he had taken from the altar with tongs. He touched my mouth and said, "See, this has touched your lips. Your guilt has departed, and your sin is removed."

Then I heard the Lord's voice saying, "Whom should I send, and who will go for us?"

I said, "Here I am; send me."

Or was it:

OR...(Totally Resigned) "Here I am; send me."

OR...(Firm, Full of Intent) "Here I am; send me."

OR...(Curious, becoming firm) "Well...I guess I'm here...ya, you can send me."

And I wonder about the first time you answered this call?

For me, it was just beginning to show signs of Spring on the mainland, I had finished my undergraduate Senior Thesis, a paper that I'd worked on all year long...and as I shuffled along in the dinner line, I remember my water glasses sliding around on a red fiberglass tray as warm heat lamps brightly illuminated the food behind glass. I'd just come back from a run, and had nothing at all on my mind. No past, no future, not even much present.

Then this strong, almost braying New England Voice from somewhere behind me says, "Tim, Tim Morehouse...what are you going to do after you graduate?" "Uh?"

It was my Senior Academic advisor who lived in the dorm where I did. I had never much talked to him in 3 years. "Well, I think you'd make a good teacher. Have you ever thought about that? My brother in law runs a school and they are advertising for interns. You could teach history and coach..." Why don't you give him a call? Why don't you apply?!

"But I'm an undergraduate with unclean lips and I certainly live among these people whose lips are definitely unclean!"

"Well, why not think about it and give him a call?! Schools need good teachers. I think you'd be a good teacher."

"Ok! Here I am; I'll call him; send me!"

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More or less...that's how I started....

How about you?

Did someone call you by name, by phone?

Did you have an experience of this work, and then have school work itself call you out?

Or perhaps your entry was accidental but then you found that the work itself demanded a deeper level of commitment than other jobs...and that level of commitment and reward was worth it?

I'm not sure, but I do know that we are called to work in schools and that every year, we must respond, "Here I am, send me."

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And this can be tough sometimes because the work is intense, emotionally and intellectually, the schedule is rigorous, and while the rewards come to us every day, our biggest reward – all those human beings using their educations and doing so in a way that represents ONE TEAM – that reward often eludes us here. We don't have an experience of that day to day...

And yet, as the prophet Isaiah is remembered for speaking truth to power year after year without seeing the full fruits of his labors, we gather here this morning to affirm that **although our work starts with a simple call and response...and that although we may never be able to calculate the full result of our response...our work in schools, actually helps build nothing less than what Jesus in his parables calls The Kingdom of Heaven.**

Because if we look at Jesus' Kingdom of Heaven sayings closely, we'll see that Heaven for Jesus is not just somewhere far off in the presence of God. It is rather a condition in

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which God's loving hope for the world and our loving hope for each other and for God find themselves intertwined, here and there. As the prayer says...on earth as it is in heaven.

So...Jesus continued, "What's a good image for God's kingdom?"

Consider a mustard seed. When scattered on the ground, it's the smallest of all the seeds on the earth; but when it's planted, it grows and becomes the largest of all vegetable plants. It produces such large branches that the birds in the sky are able to nest in its shade."

In just a minute, Andrew is going to stand up here and ask us all once again to say..."Here I am, send me." As we answer in the affirmative, I hope you do so knowing that you are growing the Kingdoms of Heaven and Earth. I hope you do so knowing, as I have found these last three years, that everyone in our ONE TEAM community is here to support you in that, and in the personal and family commitments that you bring here too. And perhaps most of all I hope you know that the seeds we plant this year will provide shade and rest not only to this year's students, faculty and parents, but also to those whose names and faces we will never know. That's good work. That's the only sort of work I want to do. God bless us in it, each and every one. Amen.