

# ETERNAL CONNECTIONS

Dr. Fred Fourie – Sunday, June 17, 2007



**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 signaled 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 were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were 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.

**ISAIAH 6:1 – 8:** 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 his 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 man 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!”** <>

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Unlike Isaiah, Peter saw God in the life and deeds of Jesus Christ. Like Isaiah Peter’s first reaction was fear: **“Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!”** He confessed how unworthy he felt and then heard the reassurance from Jesus, **“Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people.”**

Throughout human history, individuals became convinced of God’s existence and presence. Many of us have stories to tell of a specific event or period in our lives when the reality of God broke into our isolation and sinfulness and changed us from within. Many have a constant sense and conviction that God is present even closer than our breathing!

People become aware of God in millions of different ways. The stories often contradict each other. For some it is deep inside themselves – too sensitive and holy to describe adequately. The question is, **“How would you respond in the**

presence of God?" Suppose God appeared to us in this hour in this place. How would you react? Jesus gives us a picture of God, which may prove helpful in our understanding of God. He simply called God – Father, and taught us to say, "Our Father, who are in heaven."

Once there was a church in Holland, which felt strictly bound to obey God's commandment to keep the Sabbath holy. On a certain Sunday, the area was threatened by wind and waves. If the dikes were not strengthened, the people would not survive. The police notified the pastor of the danger. He was faced with the decision of whether to call off the services and urge his people to work on the dikes. Unable to make the decision, he called a meeting of his church council. They concluded that God if he really wanted, could always perform a miracle with the wind and waves. Their duty was to keep the commandment not to work on the Sabbath.

The pastor tried one last argument: Did not Jesus himself break the commandment and declare that the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath? Then an old man stood up and said, "I have always been troubled, Pastor, by something I have never ventured to say publicly. Now I must say it. I have always had the feeling that our Lord Jesus was just a bit of a liberal." Jesus was a bit of a liberal -- particularly when it comes to how we approach God.

It is impossible to maintain a cold distance from God and to carry a stern, cold, stained-glass demeanor so often associated with worship when Jesus teaches us to address God as "Father!" Jesus was liberal enough to invite us to experience God as a loving Father. Jesus was also a bit of a liberal in the kind of people he brought into in God's presence.

If some of the people who crossed paths with Jesus long ago were in Church this morning it would have looked something like this.

- There next to the aisle sits a man with a serene expression on his face. Rumor has it that just a few months ago he was running naked among the stones at the town cemetery, cutting himself with rocks and screaming at passersby.
- Next to him sits a man named **Bartimaeus**. He is a nice enough fellow, but I wish he would not get quite so carried away with the

hymns. Particularly when we are singing "Amazing Grace" and he comes to that part about "I once was blind, but now I see..."

- Next to Bartimaeus sits a woman. Her clothes are a little too gaudy. She could use some lessons in good taste. In the time of Jesus on earth she was caught in the very act of adultery. Jesus protected her from a mob. O yes, she came, because Jesus accepted her and told her to sin no more.

Jesus is fully responsible for the unexpected worshippers. Indeed, he was a bit of a liberal! So liberal, that he even invites folks like you and me. What he did for others – he will do for you! I wonder what would have happened if all of us came into this Sanctuary this morning like Isaiah with the expectation and sincere sense that God really is in this place.

One thing is for sure; our ears and hearts will be ready to hear God's quiet whisper in our hearts. Isaiah heard, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" Isaiah said, "Here am I. Send me!" Peter heard Jesus say, "Don't be afraid; from now on you will catch people."

God is here, seeking to touch and change us through God's Spirit, this very day. Do you sense God's presence? How do you act in the presence of God? Do not be afraid. Jesus called God, "Heavenly Father!" Confess your need. Respond to God's call.

AMEN

Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying,



I S A I A H 6 : 8