

“HERE AM I.”

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First Christian Reformed Church

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Text for the Sermon: Isaiah 6:1-8

Introduction:

If you go to Cairo, Egypt today you can visit two very famous graves. You can go to the pyramids and visit the tombs of the great kings of Egypt, the most famous of which is the tomb of King Tut. “He was only seventeen when he died. He was buried with solid gold chariots and thousands of golden artifacts. His gold coffin was found in a burial site filled with *tons* of gold. The Egyptians believed they could take earthly treasures into the afterlife. But all the treasures intended for King Tut’s eternal enjoyment stayed right where they were until Howard Carter discovered the burial chamber in 1922.

“The other grave is much harder to find. It’s off a dusty back alley in a graveyard for American missionaries. The tombstone reads: “William Borden, 1887-1913.” In 1904 when William Borden graduated from high school, he was already a millionaire and heir to the Borden Dairy Estate. As a graduation gift his parents gave him a trip around the world.

“Traveling through Asia, the Middle East, and Europe gave Borden a burden for the world's hurting people. Writing home, he said, "I'm going to give my life to prepare for the mission field." When he made this decision, he wrote in the back of his Bible two words: "No Reserves." Turning down high-paying job offers after graduating from Yale University, he entered two more words in his Bible: "No Retreats." Completing studies at Princeton Seminary, Borden sailed for China to work with Muslims, stopping first at Egypt for some preparation. While there he was stricken with cerebral meningitis and died within a month. In his Bible underneath the words "No Reserves" and "No Retreats," he had written the words "No Regrets."

(<http://elbourne.org/sermons/index.mv?illustration+3168>).

What a “contrast between those two graves. Borden’s was obscure, dusty, and hidden off the back alley of a street littered with garbage. Tutankhamen’s tomb glittered with unimaginable wealth. Yet where are these two young men now? One, who lived in opulence and called himself king is in the misery of a Christless eternity. The other, who lived a modest life on earth in service of the one true King, is enjoying his everlasting reward in the presence of his Lord. Tut’s life was tragic because of an awful truth discovered too late – he couldn’t take his treasures with him. William Borden’s life was

triumphant. Why? Because instead of leaving behind his treasures, he sent them on ahead.”

(<http://www.thegoodsteward.com/article.php3?articleID=1341>).

No Reserves, No Retreats, No Regrets. That is the testimony of a transformed life. And that is an example of the kind of people and the kind of church are we called to be.

I heard the voice of the Lord

Isaiah 6:8 And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" Then I said, "Here am I! Send me."

For the first time in this incredible vision, the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, the Lord of Hosts, speaks to Isaiah.

How many would like to hear the voice of the Lord? How many would like for God to talk to them? How many of us feel like our lives might be more transformed if God spoke to us in a vision? What about all of us who are not eye witnesses to this kind of majestic life-transforming vision of the glory of God?

Peter was a man who saw visions and heard the voice of the Lord. He helps us with this one.

II Peter 1:16-19 For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. [17] For when he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased," [18] we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain. [19] **And we have something more sure, the prophetic word, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place,** until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.

We are not disadvantaged. We have something more sure, the very Words of God given to us by His Holy Spirit. This truth transforms just as certainly as any vision. When we read and hear God's truth with faith our minds and hearts are renewed, and our lives are transformed by the renewing of our minds and the changing of our hearts.

The Word of the Lord is the voice of the Lord. When we read and hear God's Word we are on the threshold of heaven, for heaven is God and His Word is eternally heard there.

The point of what I am doing right now is not me, the messenger, it is the message. Not the vessel, but the content. Not the delivery or style or manner, but the message. It is the Word of God whether spoken by a donkey or an angel, a prophet or a fisherman. What is important here this evening is not the servant, but the subject. The subject is of greatest importance.

“Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?”

The question is huge. God has one interest, that the entire earth becomes full of the glory of God. This is the conversation of heaven, this is the agenda of every heavenly council, and this is the docket for every divine consultation. This is the business of heaven and every messenger of heaven: casting the vision of the glory of God for the transformation of all people that we might be gathered into the community of the people of God. Every creature in heaven talks and sings of it. “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, the whole earth is full of your glory.”

“Here am I, Send me.” Hinnainee – hin-nay-nee

What a response, what a change. Just a moment ago he was terrified; it was “woe is me” and now it’s “here am I.” A moment ago, he was a dead man, now he is alive, full of life, ready to live, to move, to go wherever God will call him and send him.

He who has been rescued and saved from utter fear and dread, now fears nothing. What else is there to fear? He has faced hell and been delivered. He is overwhelmed with Romans 8 grace that says with boldness and confidence:

Romans 8:31-35 If God is for us, who can be against us? 32 He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? 33 Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. 34 Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. 35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?

Do you wonder if the reason, so few are willing to wholeheartedly serve the Lord is because they have no conviction of their sin and no experience of the matchless and measureless grace of their redeemer who has carried away all their guilt and shame? Only such a person joyfully enters into the Lord’s service without thought of what that call may entail.

“Here am I” is the resurrected sinners’ response. The word in Hebrew is “Hinnainee.” Literally it is, “Behold me!”

When God tested Abraham, He called out to him, “Abraham!” And he said, “Hinnainee” (Genesis 22:1).

When God spoke to Jacob in a vision at night, He called, "Jacob, Jacob." And he said, “Hinnainee” (Genesis 46:2).

When God called out of the burning bush, “Moses, Moses!” And he said, “Hinnainee” (Ex. 3:4).

And when God wanted to send the disciple Ananias to Paul in Damascus, he spoke to him in a vision saying, “Ananias.” And he said, “Here I am, Lord” (Acts 9:10).

Hinnainee is the servants reply, the disciple’s response, the Christian’s commitment.

When you rise up in the morning, say “Here am I, Lord. I am yours to do with as you please.” When you drive to work or school or church, say, “Hinnainee.” When you drive to meet with a friend, or go into a new and unfamiliar situation, say, “Hinnainee.” When you lie down at night, say “Here am I, Lord, your servant. Your will be done. Refresh me this night for your service tomorrow, for your glory.” Whatever you do, wherever you go, say, “Hinnainee, here am I, Lord.”

The commitment of a transformed life is unconditional. Isaiah states no conditions or prior negotiation. He expresses no reservations, no doubts, no hesitations. No reserves, no retreats, no regrets. Here am I, send me.

That’s the motto of the transformed life and of the *Reformed faith*.

We have said Isaiah’s vision paints a clear picture of what it means to be a Reformed church and a Reformed Christian in four ways. *First*, to be Reformed or Calvinistic means to be captured by a vision of God as glorious and majestic, sovereign and supreme over all things including our salvation.

Second, it means to be broken by the conviction of our sinfulness, that from conception we have inherited the sinfulness of our race. We are a people of unclean lips, unclean hearts, unclean lives and we live under the judgment and wrath of God because of it. It means being humbled.

Third, it means we have been delivered from sin and guilt and shame by the free gift of God’s grace through the shed blood of Jesus Christ who alone saves us and forgives us. We are saved by grace alone. Apart from His grace there is no salvation. It means being filled with gratitude.

But to be Reformed means *one more thing*. It means a life transformed by the inner work of the Holy Spirit, and a life consecrated or committed to God in unconditional worship and service.

The Reformed faith is sinners, lost and helpless before a holy God, who receive His saving grace in Christ and offer themselves as living sacrifices in vibrant worship, gratitude and service.

John Calvin's motto for his life was, "My heart I offer to you, Lord Jesus, eagerly and sincerely."

Transformation takes Community.

When God sends Isaiah, where does He send him? He sends him right back into his community, back to his people, the people of unclean lips to tell his people of his vision of the holiness and glory of God and the sinfulness of all people.

But when he goes back, he has a whole new set of priorities and a whole new perspective. Transformed people don't major in minors. Transformed people are no longer enamored with trivial and temporal things. Transformed people are no longer petty.

They dream, they pray, they press on and strive for the upward calling. Transformed believers think about how God might use them to make a spiritual difference in their corner of His world. Transformed believers' prayer for things beyond themselves.

Transformed churches think big, they take risks, they talk about how can they impact their community, where they live and work. Remember our four visions from this morning (Serve, Assoc. pastor, building, Hausa).

Can you imagine a community of believers that see the glory of God in ways they never have before? Can you imagine worshipping God with fresh fervor?

Can you imagine a community of believers that acknowledges and confesses their sins with true brokenness, falling on their faces with heartfelt repentance? They joyfully receive the free gift of God's grace and because of this transformation, they live lives wholly devoted to God, His people and His service.

Imagine a community of believers transformed by the glory and grace of the living God. Can you imagine a community of believers so transformed by the power and presence

and ministry of the Holy Spirit that the realities of our faith come alive in powerful new ways?

A ravishing vision of God's holiness and love changes everything, makes all the difference. Having received so much grace, Isaiah can say "here am I, send me" confident in God's future grace. Do you feel inadequate, do you feel like someone else can do better? If so, we misunderstand grace and what God is asking of us. We are not signing up to do something extraordinary for God. No one in the Bible did that. No, we say "here am I" to let an extraordinary God do extraordinary things through ordinary us.

God asks us, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" Who will answer, hinnainee, here am I?

Don't waste your life. Don't live for things that don't matter. Live for the glory of God in all you say and do, so that you too can come to the end and say, "No Reserves, No Retreats, No Regrets."

What are you asking God for? What is God asking of you? Can you pray thy will be done each day and live expectantly for Him to answer, and give you the grace for whatever He asks?

In silence listen, listen to hear if the Spirit might be saying something to you right now, about how He has been trying to get your attention or is asking you to go and do something or is moving you to step out and take a risk for Him or minister or serve in a new way. In silence pray, seek the Lord, and listen for a few moments.

Holy Father in Heaven, in response to the unmerited, unconditional free offer of grace and salvation, we offer to you our lives and all that we have and are. This is our offering, our act of worship, our tangible expression of our joy and thanksgiving for who you are and for all you have done for us. "No reserve," "no retreat", and "no regrets."