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Sermon

The Lord's Prayer: A Call To Courage in Prayer

Isaiah 6:1-7; Rev 4; Matthew 6:5-9,10-13

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Cometh the hour; Cometh the man. Ever heard that before? Here we have such an experience for the People of God. The year is 740 BC and it is the year in which the long reign of a good King economically, politically and militarily ended. After fifty two years of stable rule the question in many minds will have been, "What happens now?"

Reading the stories of the two kingdoms Israel and Judah is almost like reading the news on the Middle East today. That does not mean that what is happening now is right. It only means that in the long history of the Holy Land stability is a rare and precious commodity.

Into this situation comes the Prophet Isaiah possibly one of the nobility according to Jewish tradition. Our reading focusses on two things: his experience of God as he comes to worship and his call to prophesy to the people of Judah. I want to focus today only on the first of these.

So we can imagine Isaiah coming to the Temple to worship. He is given this great vision of the awesome majesty and holiness of God.

Think of what this means for a moment. We come into our worship centre to pray and worship. We have the expectation that we will meet with the living God as is reported often in our times of worship. But this time the veil between this world and the next is lifted back a little further than usual and what we expected to be a time of comfort in the presence of God turns out to be very disturbing to say the least.

In times of revival this is a not uncommon experience. Many during those times have found themselves fleeing from the Presence. Isaiah did not but quite naturally cries out in despair at his own sinfulness.

His cry, as will ours, was heard and a Seraph is sent to touch his lips with a hot coal from the altar and forgiveness is pronounced.

Dear brothers and Sisters, as we enter into a period of focussed study and action in prayer can we begin with a vision of the Living, Holy, Awe Inspiring nature of the God with whom we have to do. Listen again to our second reading: (Read Rev. 4). Can you sense His majesty? Can you sense His power? Can you sense the awesome greatness of His being?

What would it be like to come directly into His nearer presence? Frightening, yet somehow we are able to remain.

When we pray please be aware of the fullness of God's nature as the Bible portrays it. Be encouraged that this is no insignificant person with whom we have to do. Sometimes the issues and problems facing us are quite simply overwhelming. It is hard to lift up our eyes and see the enormity of the One whose aid we call upon. At times of extreme difficulty, great insoluble problems like the war in Syria, a brain tumor in a friend, or the struggles of a loved one, what on earth do we think we can achieve by praying!?!?

And the answer is, "A great deal!!" Not because of our prayer but because of the greatness of the one with whom we have to do.

Keeping in mind the awesome nature of God hear the first two words of the Lord's Prayer, "Our Father..."

Can you see from this that it doesn't matter a whole heap what words we use. Can you understand the husband or father of a dangerously sick wife or child may not be able to pray at all but will understand in the words of St Paul that, "...the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words." Then notice how Paul goes on "And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the Saints according to the will of God (Romans 8; 26 and 27)

Do you see from this that when we pray, even if that prayer is simply groaning or silence, or shouting at God in our pain, or a murmured word for a passing ambulance, that the Spirit of God is praying for us translating the hopelessly inadequate words we have into intercessions on our behalf.

I saw the Lord high and lifted up in all His awesome majesty and power and despite my fear and sense of inadequacy despite my inability with words;

I dared to say, "Our Father".

Cometh the Hour; Cometh the man. Will you be the man or woman who will take up the challenge? Will you be willing to say to the Lord high and lifted up, "Our Father."