

## Go and Play Outside

*June 3, 2007*

(Trinity Sunday - Year C)

Isaiah 6: 1-8

*St. Alban's Episcopal Church, Waco, Texas*

The Old Testament scripture lesson today is from the Prophet Isaiah.

Morgan Ballantine, who graduated from high school last month, used this same scripture passage in her sermon to us 3 weeks ago, on Youth Sunday.

In the Book of Isaiah, Isaiah is a prophet to the Hebrew people, warning them about their empty faith before they are exiled and Jerusalem is destroyed.

In this passage, Isaiah sees a vision of God - and of heavenly creatures calling out to each other, saying:

“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts;  
The whole earth is full of his glory.”

Isaiah then receives a message from God, he receives a call to be sent out to do the work he has been given to do.

Isaiah hears the voice of the Lord asking:

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

And Isaiah replies:

“Here am I; send me!”

Isaiah is sent out into the world to speak the truth, and to call the Hebrew nation back to God.

And, we are sent out into the world to do the work that God has given *us* to do.

When I was a little boy, I had a friend named Walter.

Walter lived on the street just behind ours.

He and I would play at his house all the time.

Many days we would play outside and we would climb the magnolia tree that was in his front yard.

Yet, some days we would just want to play inside with his toys.

Walter and I always had to make a decision:

To either play inside with his toys or to play outside in his yard.

On days with good weather, Walter's mother would always encourage us to play outside in the fresh air, rather than to play all cooped up inside.

On warm and sunny days, Walter's mother would push us out the door and tell us:

“You boys need to go and play outside.”

The same is true of us in the Church.

Sometimes we need to be sent outside, to work and play in the fresh air.

The prophet Isaiah was asked by God:

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

And, Isaiah replies:

“Here I am; send me!”

We do not gather here in this church, Sunday after Sunday, to form a little club of like-minded believers.

We gather here in this church, Sunday after Sunday, to listen for God, who is asking each of us:

“Whom shall I send?”

We gather here in this church so that we may receive power to be sent, so that God will light a fire under each of us and send us out to do the work that God has given us to do.

As you all know, each Sunday, after we receive communion, we pray together the Post Communion Prayer.

Ever since I have been here at St. Alban's, we have said the Post Communion prayer that is on page 365 of The Book of Common Prayer.

But, beginning today, we will use a different Post Communion Prayer, we will be using the prayer that is on page 366 of the Prayer Book.

If you will all please get out your Prayer Books, and turn to page 366, we are going to say this prayer together right now:

*Almighty and everliving God,  
we thank you for feeding us with the spiritual food  
of the most precious Body and Blood  
of your Son our Savior Jesus Christ;  
and for assuring us in these holy mysteries  
that we are living members of the Body of your Son,  
and heirs of your eternal kingdom.  
And now, Father, send us out  
to do the work you have given us to do,  
to love and serve you  
as faithful witnesses of Christ our Lord.  
To him, to you, and to the Holy Spirit,  
be honor and glory, now and for ever.  
Amen.*

There are several reasons why I want us to use this prayer:

First, it helps us to use new prayers every now and then, to jar our minds  
- so that we are not just going on auto pilot and so that we make  
sure that we are paying attention to the words.

Secondly, this prayer is comforting because it more closely resembles  
the older, more traditional words of prior editions of the Prayer  
Book.

And, most importantly, I want us to use this prayer primarily because of  
these words in the middle of that prayer:

“And now, Father, send us out  
to do the work you have given us to do.”

The Holy Eucharist, the Communion service, especially in the Roman  
Catholic Church, is sometimes called the “Mass.”

The word “Mass” comes from the Latin word, *missa*, which means “to  
send.”

Our time together on Sunday mornings - at the Eucharist, at the Mass -  
sends us out,

Which makes sense because God, the Holy Trinity, is a God who sends.

In the Old Testament, this Trinity, this one God, asks Isaiah: “Whom  
shall I send?”

In the New Testament, this Trinity is sent to us:

In the baby of Bethlehem,

In the dove on the shores of the Jordan River,

In the breath of the upper room and

In the wind and flames of Pentecost.

This Trinity is a God of sending, a God who is sent to us and a God who sends us.

The Church always needs to be reminded that we worship a God who sends and who is sent.

Because it can become very easy, very seductive, for the Church to focus on staying the same and just playing indoors with our toys:

Playing inside with our silver chalices, our music, our beautiful vestments, our buildings, our hand-carved wooden cross.

But, we need to be sent outside, to work and play and love others, in the fresh air.

For, the work of the Trinity is not just done inside a building with stained glass windows.

The work of God is done outside - at Starbucks and in office cubicles and at Baylor and under the bridge and in apartment buildings.

The work of God is done when we have the courage to go out and say:

“Here I am; send me!”

And, a little after 11 o'clock this morning, God will push us out the door of this church and say:

“You boys and girls need to go and play...outside.”

AMEN.

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