

**Prophet**  
**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.

<sup>2</sup>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.

<sup>3</sup>And one called to another and said:  
'Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts;  
the whole earth is full of his glory.'

<sup>4</sup>The pivots on the thresholds shook  
at the voices of those who called,  
and the house filled with smoke.

<sup>5</sup>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!'

<sup>6</sup>Then one of the seraphs flew to me,  
holding a live coal  
that had been taken from the altar with a pair of tongs.

<sup>7</sup>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.'

<sup>8</sup>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!'

**Epistle**  
**Romans 8:12-17**

<sup>12</sup> So then, brothers and sisters,  
we are debtors,  
not to the flesh,  
to live according to the flesh—

<sup>13</sup> for if you live according to the flesh,  
you will die;  
but if by the Spirit  
you put to death  
the deeds of the body,  
you will live.

<sup>14</sup> For all who are led by the Spirit of God  
are children of God.

<sup>15</sup> For you did not receive a spirit of slavery  
to fall back into fear,  
but you have received a spirit of adoption.

When we cry, 'Abba! Father!'

<sup>16</sup> it is that very Spirit  
bearing witness with our spirit  
that we are children of God,

<sup>17</sup> and if children, then heirs,  
heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ—

if, in fact, we suffer with him  
so that we may also be glorified with him.

## Reading the Prophet this Week

Trinity Sunday, Year B, Revised and Catholic lectionary  
We get this nugget of a call vision from First Isaiah,  
Anchored in earthly history and in a celestial vision

Did you pause to locate 'the year that King Uzziah died',  
Judah's king as Israel fell to Assyria in the mid-700's BCE,  
through prosperity, over-reach, his last 10 years side-lined?

Did you pause to visualize the heavenly imagery,  
having sung it often enough in 'Holy Holy Holy' to Nicaea,  
In a mash-up with the Revelation to John?

How do you feel and voice the prophet's response:  
Awed, abashed, humbled, confessing 'unclean lips',  
yet given a theophany?

How does the imagery of call as a burning coal resonate,  
As transformation of the guilt or sin, full on the mouth,  
By a divine fiery *seraph*?

The final liturgical exchange:  
Divine call, and prophet's offer back,  
Familiar even to our most casual participants.

What's our 'social location', not simply our consumer identity  
Privileges, socioeconomic, political, ethnic, racialized  
In relation to wider and ultimate frames than 'me'?

How ultimate, yet intimate, is our divine ordination,  
as creatures, children of God, called and sent?

## Reading the Epistle this Week

Oddly, the lectionary jumps backwards in c8,  
Omitting vv18-21 as noted last week  
Naming us in relation to Creator, Christ, Spirit  
Shopping us a Trinity Sunday text

I'll stick by scholars' consensus that this is late Paul,  
an open letter circulated around the Mediterranean,  
the explicit author, occasion and audience a pretext  
for a more generalized summary argument:  
'the gospel according to Paul'

Paul's use of 'flesh' differs from John's  
Humans have *sarka*, *psychē*, and *pneuma*  
God here as *Pater*, *Xristos* and *Pneuma*  
centuries before 'trinitarian' talk

this is not esoteric Gnosticism –  
reflecting on ethical implications for our living,  
rooted in our self-understanding of 'social location'  
our *somata* bodies in the singular *soma* body

Our condition, situation, state or context  
distinguishable from Isaiah's construction of 'unclean lips'  
sets up how what spirit we will claim,  
fearful slavery or adoption as children of God, heirs

Anticipating suffering,  
And in turn being glorified 'in him',  
Mapping the divine onto the human  
Construed in unitary, binary, or triune terms...

**Gospel**  
**John 3:1-17**

Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. <sup>2</sup>He came to Jesus by night and said to him, 'Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do apart from the presence of God.' <sup>3</sup>Jesus answered him, 'Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above.' <sup>4</sup>Nicodemus said to him, 'How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother's womb and be born?' <sup>5</sup>Jesus answered, 'Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. <sup>6</sup>What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. <sup>7</sup>Do not be astonished that I said to you, "You must be born from above." <sup>8</sup>The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.' <sup>9</sup>Nicodemus said to him, 'How can these things be?' <sup>10</sup>Jesus answered him, 'Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things? <sup>11</sup>Very truly, I tell you, we speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen; yet you do not receive our testimony. <sup>12</sup>If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? <sup>13</sup>No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. <sup>14</sup>And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, <sup>15</sup>that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. <sup>16</sup>'For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. <sup>17</sup>'Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

**Reading the Gospel This Week**

Trinity, in Year B of Mark, we get Nicodemus at night  
(again, w/ Lent 2 in Year A, v14-21 Lent 4 this year)  
Inviting us to John's binary of spirit and flesh,  
Being born from above, or of water and spirit

Since we've belaboured 'John-John' in Easter season,  
I've relegated this to a footnote  
(and lay-led worship this WOW Sunday leaves the lectionary)  
But it's in the back of our mind, defining our own hermeneutic

It's tough for us to get past a culturally dominant,  
Yankee Evangelical, 'born-again' hermeneutic,  
Reading our situation and our offer of salvation  
In terms of individual conversion

On Trinity Sunday, could we linger  
on Creation being born and reborn  
on Christ, re-presenting incarnation,  
on Spirit, 'The wind blows where it chooses'

How can we listen respectfully to others' hermeneutic,  
framing our need, and Creator's response in Christ and Spirit  
or rather anticipated by Creator, Christ, Spirit?

How will we hear a tension between 3:16 and 3:17  
'God gave Son, everyone who believes not perish'  
'God sent Son, not condemn world, but save it'

In our polarized culture wars:  
Individual conversation to personal salvation  
Or political commitments to the common good

Robert Alter, in notes to his 2019 Hebrew Bible translation,  
Sends us to a poem by Pushkin, "The Prophet"  
Here, translated by A.Z. Foreman

*My spirit wracked by thirst for grace,  
I wandered in a darkling land  
Till at a crossing of the ways  
I saw a six-wing'd Seraph stand.  
With fingers light as dream at night  
He brushed mine eyes and they grew bright  
Opening unto prophecies  
Wils as a startled eaglet's eyes.  
He touched mine ears. Then noise and sound  
Poured into me from all around:  
I heard the shudders of the sky,  
The sweep of angel hosts on high,  
The creep of beasts below in the seas,  
The seep of sap in valley trees.  
Then leaning to my lips he wring  
Thereout my sinful little tongue  
Of guile and idle caviling;  
And with his bloody fingertips  
He set between my wasting lips  
A Serpent's wise and forked sting.  
And with his sword he cleft my chest  
And ripped my quaking heart out whole,  
And in my sundered breast he pressed  
A blazing shard of living coal.  
There in the desert I lay dead  
Until the voice from heaven said:  
"Arise O Prophet! Work My will,  
That thou has not perceived and heard.  
On land and sea thy charge fulfill  
And burn Man's heart with this My Word."*

You may have come to John Donne  
as a 'Metaphysical Poet' in high school,  
depending on your age,  
but I came to him just before the end of college,  
in a biography of Andrew Roddan,  
Methodist who ran First UC Vancouver souplines in the 1930's,  
with title 'Batter My Heart' taken from "Holy Sonnet 14" 1608

*Batter my heart, three-person'd God, for you  
As yet but knock, breathe, shine, and seek to mend;  
That I may rise and stand, o'erthrow me, and bend  
Your force to break, blow, burn, and make me new.  
I, like an usurp'd town to another due,  
Labour to admit you, but oh, to no end;  
Reason, your viceroy in me, me should defend,  
But is captiv'd, and proves weak or untrue.  
Yet dearly I love you, and would be lov'd fain,  
But am betroth'd unto your enemy:  
Divorce me, untie or break that knot again,  
Take me to you, imprison me, for I,  
Except you enthrall me, never shall be free,  
Nor ever chaste, except you ravish me.*

Like the Pushkin, Donne seemed a good appendix for these  
notes on the lectionary for Trinity Sunday, May 19, 2024  
even though I'm not preaching, in favour of WOW meeting...