

## Here Am I, Send Me

Isaiah 6:1-8

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“Here am I, send me.” The passage you heard from the Prophet Isaiah ending with the words “Here am I, send me,” is read most often at a service of ordination, the ritual for ordaining a man or a woman to ministry in the church. “Here am I, send me.” It is the text I heard on my ordination day in 1975; it is also appropriate for the whole church to hear this text again on this Confirmation Day in 2012! Ordination and Confirmation have much in common! Both are occasions of joyful commitment!

If you were to close your eyes now and picture Isaiah’s scene in the heavens: angels flying here and there; choirs singing lovely anthems, a royal throne covered with purple cloth, you might hear, as Isaiah did, the voice of God speaking directly to you: **WHOM SHALL I SEND, AND WHO WILL GO FOR US?**” Then you open your eyes, pinch yourself to be sure it’s not a reverie or a practical joke, and you find yourself saying out loud, to God, “Here am I, send me.”

This is a sacred scene, an intimate scene, a scene of conviction and commitment. God issues an invitation; a faithful soul responds.

Isaiah was still a teenager at the time of his Confirmation day. He was 15, maybe 16 at the most. He had been wrestling with God, wrestling with his purpose in life, wrestling with his doubts, wrestling with his questions. And then in a moment of solitude, a moment of clarity, it all comes together, and he says what he’s been needing to say for a long time: ‘Here am I, send me.

I’ll be a light in your world!

I’ll be a peacemaker in your neighborhood.

I'll ease someone's pain.  
I'll love the one who's hardest to love.  
Here am I, send me.'

My own ordination ceremony is vivid in my mind. It took place out-of-doors on the Great Plains. The wind was blowing that day. The laying on of hands was conducted by a full-blooded Lakota Indian, Rev. Jonah Little Wounded. The sun set on the horizon and the air grew chilly, but the warmth of the congregation overcame the chill. The Bible was read aloud, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us"? And I said, "Here am I, send me." Such moments are etched forever into our souls. Today is such a day.

On a day in Montgomery, Alabama, God said to Rosa Parks, "Whom shall I send?" And she replied, "Here am I, send me." That was the day she refused to sit in the back of the bus, the day she got arrested! It was the beginning of a freedom movement that changed the soul of America.

On a day in Leominster, Massachusetts, God said to a farmer named John Chapman, "Whom shall I send?" And Mr. Chapman filled his gunnysack with apple seeds and Bibles and headed west, planting orchards and planting churches at the same time. We know him as Johnny Appleseed. It was the beginning of a spiritual awakening in America.

On a day in Americus, Georgia, God said to Millard Fuller, "Whom shall I send?" And Mr. Fuller said, "Here am I, send me to end substandard housing everywhere in the world." In that moment was born Habitat for Humanity, an undertaking of justice at its best.

On a day in South Glastonbury, Connecticut, God said to the Congregational Church, "Whom shall I send?" And the people said in one loud accord, "Here we are, send us."

Send us where there is bullying and we'll put a stop to it. Send us where people don't have adequate health care and we'll advocate for them in the legislature. Send us where somebody is lonely and we'll befriend them. Send us where people have drinking problems and we'll encourage their sobriety.

On the Day of Confirmation, God says to each of our youth and to anyone else who has ears to hear: "Whom shall I send?" And all who are willing respond: "Here am I, send me!"

Isaiah's response to God was a trusting response, an open-ended response. Ours is to be the same; trusting and open-ended. We don't say, 'Send me...but not to teach in the church school.' We don't say, 'Send me...but not to a homeless shelter in Hartford.' We don't say, 'Send me...but not to be the preacher on Laity Sunday.' We simply say, "Send me." We leave the rest up to God.

My hope is that this day will be forever etched on our souls; a day when many sophomores, and one senior, make a lasting commitment; a day when Confirmation sponsors and Confirmation families make a lasting commitment; a day when the whole church responds to God's invitation saying, "Here am I, send me."

In the greatest of hope, I say Amen!