

In his famous sermon called “The Shaking of the Foundations,” German theologian Paul Tillich says that chapter six of Isaiah is one of the greatest in the Old Testament. Tillich says that the reason is because this little story reveals the essence of Biblical Religion. Dr. Tillich says that humans can only experience God through their experience of the holiness of God.

Verse 1 says “In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord...”

He says he saw the Lord. How many of you have seen the Lord? With your own eyes!

Isaiah was part of the royal family in the southern kingdom of Israel between 740 and 701 BC. As one of the counselors, Isaiah had access to kings; he was able to see kings face to face.

Not long after king Uzziah’s death, Isaiah was in the temple. He just could not get over his sadness over the loss of his beloved king.

But that day was different. He saw the Lord.

But not quite! He did not see the Lord; he saw the hem of his robe filling the temple. He saw the wings of angels that covered the Lord. He only saw the smoke which filled the house. He only heard the voices of the angel.

He didn’t see God; God did not reveal himself fully; God still veiled himself and remained hidden; but that was more than enough to shake the foundations of the temple, not to mention the foundation of Isaiah’s self-existence. Isaiah said, “Woe is me; I am lost!”

Isaiah collapsed, and all the foundations he has built up through his royal background, education, and career seemed useless. “Woe is me; I am lost.

I am a sinner; I cannot handle this; I am nothing; I am unworthy...”

And the same thing is happening in our Gospel lesson this morning.

Peter said, “God away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man.”

A lifetime fisherman, Peter knew what he was doing. But it was one of those nights; they got nothing.

Here comes a carpenter, who has nothing to do with the fishing business, telling Peter what to do.

We know the story. Following what Jesus told him to do, Simon Peter caught so many fish that night. We can picture how happy he and his colleagues may have been. There was abundance, joy, gratitude and celebration.

But the story does not end there; Luke’s interest was not for all those frustrated fishermen to come and learn how to catch many fish and get rich.

Luke is rather pointing us to higher ground.

What grabs my attention is this: once Jesus got into Peter’s boat, of course, he got fish, many fish so that the boat started sinking.

What surprised Peter more was this: there was a shaking of the foundation in his heart and soul. By sitting next to this man of God, there was a spiritual earthquake he couldn’t handle.

He said, “Lord, go away from me; I am unworthy; I am a sinful man.”

Now, everything has changed; his net is full of fish. But not quite sure what that means, his focus is getting shifted onto something different, something bigger.

Jesus said: “Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people.”

Luke does not tell us all the details; he doesn’t even tell us what they did with all the fish they caught.

All he says is this: when they had brought their boats to shore, they left everything and followed him.

Folks! Faith is a sort of mystery. ‘Mystery’ means we do not understand it fully. The reason why faith is a mystery is because we

do not understand God 100%.

God only reveals Himself in a hidden way. That means God is always bigger than we think; that means God always speaks to us in a way we never expect; that means God has always surprises for us; to me, this is a very positive nature of faith. This makes me always stay hopeful in faith.

As much as faith is a mystery, so is our journey in life. In life, there is always something new, something surprising, and something we never expect: good or bad. There is no certainty just like we never know whether the stock market will go up or down tomorrow; there is so much at stake in our lives.

But to me, that doesn't make me nervous. Trust the Lord, be positive, and stay hopeful in faith.

Jesus said, “Throw your net into the deep water.”

Having worked all night long but caught nothing, Peter had every right to say no; he could have said, “No, sir, I know what I am doing; it is not going to work! I know that”

“Yet,” said Peter. “If you say so, I will let down the nets as you directed.”

That made all the difference. Prophet Isaiah and Simon Peter were just human beings just like you and me.

We often feel empty, alone, sad, unworthy, and unsatisfied, but then God reaches out to us through the surprising different means of his presence. Jesus steps into our boats and tells us to launch out into deeper water.

Those who follow the divine guidance will see their fishnets filled with much fish; those who listen will be called faithful disciples of Jesus Christ. Amen.