

February 9, 2025, Sermon
“The WOW Experience” Luke 5:1-11

Christian author Anne Lamott had once been asked about her prayer life. The two best prayers she knows are, in the morning, “Help me, help me, help me,” and at night, before sleep, “Thank you, thank you, thank you.” She now has a third prayer she prays at least once a day, a short prayer, a one-word prayer: “WOW!” You should say “WOW!” to God at least once a day, she advised.

I believe we all have “Wow” experiences. Several years ago, I was riding my bicycle near Carter Lake above Loveland. I was climbing a very steep hill. When I made it to the summit, I turned around to see the expanse of the land off in the distance. There was a layer of fog below me that made the landscape come alive with the colors of the sunrise. I heard myself say, “WOW” out loud. The experience left an impression on me. I often think of that time when I had a “Wow experience” of God and reminded the reality of living hits me every day.

There are two biblical characters that know a lot our sinful nature. Isaiah, after seeing his vision of the Lord

on the throne, says, “Woe to me! I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among people of unclean lips.” (Isaiah 6: 5). Then there is Peter who just witness a “Wow” experience from Jesus with a major catch of fish, and he laments, “Go away from me Lord, I am a sinful man.” (Luke 5:8) All human responses to God’s actions in their lives. All begin with expressions of not being worthy, and then God’s transformation in them is a “Wow” experience. How did that happen? What changed in them?

So, let me set the stage for the Old Testament reading. It takes place, Isaiah tells us, “In the year that King Uzziah died.” So, who is King Uzziah? His story is an interesting one. He became the King of Judah after his father was assassinated, and he then reigned as king for 52 years. He would have been the only king that many people in Isaiah’s day had ever known. And he was a good king. According to scripture ([2 Chronicles 26](#)), “*he did what was right in the sight of the Lord.*” That is, until pride led to his downfall. “*He grew proud,*” scripture tells us, “*To his destruction.*” Uzziah’s pride led him to enter the Temple without proper humility before God. The Lord immediately struck him with leprosy, and he was

leprous until he died. The best king the people ever knew. Gone!

So, during all this uncertainty and anxiety, what did the prophet Isaiah do? He went to the Temple – to pray, and to worship God. Isaiah went to the Temple to be reminded of the one, singular truth that would accompany him all his days: That the Lord was on his throne. Kings come and go. Threats to our nation, and our world, come and go. But through it all, God is faithful. The Lord is on his throne. “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of God’s glory.” (Isaiah 6:3) Then, now, and always.

Isaiah’s first response to this incredible vision, “Wow” experience that he has is to confess that he is not worthy. He is not worthy to be in the presence of God. He is not worthy to receive this vision. He is a sinner. And he is filled with fear.

But Isaiah’s vision doesn’t end there. After he confesses his sin, his unworthiness, God forgives him his sin and makes him worthy. Just as God forgives our sin at the start of every Sunday’s worship service. Thankfully, not with a live coal touching our mouth! Isaiah is forgiven. And then, and only then, Isaiah is

ready to respond to this vision, to this time of adoration and worship. And the same is true for us. *“Whom shall I send?”* God asks. And we respond, *“Here am I; send me!”*

The vision was the turning point in Isaiah’s life. It turned him around and made him a different person. It not only transformed his life, but it transformed the life of everyone who would listen to what he said.

Then there is Jesus telling Peter he has the potential to fulfill Jesus’ mission. Imagine Peter, exhausted after a long night of fishing with no results. Think about the people in Isaiah’s time, and the prophet’s frustration. We all face times where our efforts feel futile, where our dreams seem out of reach. But just like Peter, we must not let these moments discourage us from trusting in God's plan.

When Jesus instructs Peter to "put out into the deep," he's asking him to step beyond his familiar territory, to trust in a new way. This applies to our lives as well; sometimes, to see true transformation, we need to leave our comfort zone and venture into areas where we feel uncertain. This experience is a turning

point for Peter. He recognizes his own limitations and realizes the power of Jesus to work through him.

May we reflect on our deep waters. Where in your life do you need to step out of your comfort zone and trust God's guidance, even if it feels daunting? Are we willing to follow God's instructions? Can we be just like Peter, open to the possibility that God can bring about miraculous abundance in our life when we fully surrender to His will.

Jesus placed us in this ministry to go fishing for people. He sees potential in each of us. In fact, He sees so much possibility, He has no time to blab with us about our failures. He's ready to grab us and go fishing. Or maybe a hot coal touches our lips, our guilt has been taken away. All we need to do is follow. And once we decide to follow, we're past our problems and primed for the possibilities. It begins with a sense of reverence at the mystery of God—when, in addition to praying “Help me” and “thank you”—we say daily, “WOW!” to God's love for us. Amen.