

LISTENING ALONGSIDE



ECHOING CHRIST

Lenten Devotions 2017

Friday,
March 24, 2017

By Anna Anderson

We were piled into a large room – all 50 or so of us who were planning on being missionaries that summer. We were college students, all of us ripe for the task, thinking we all knew a little more than we actually did. Trying to impress one another and appear confident as we listened during that long orientation weekend, I remember thinking, "I am scared to death!" I don't have any idea what I'm actually doing. I just felt that summer missions was something I wanted to do that year and, well, there I was, sitting in a room with many others, all of whom, to me, seemed way more confident than I did. I was on a journey to be a summer youth worker for a church where I knew no one. Unfamiliar, unprepared, questioning everything I had thought made sense several months ago when I applied to do this summer job, I listened quietly during the worship service.

We were just praying, we were simply seeking God's guidance in our work for the summer and then . . . I heard it. In my spirit, I heard a voice that I could not ignore. *I choose you.* What? What was that? *I choose you.* God spoke to me in the confusion and uncertainty and questioning of that time. God reaffirmed my decision to work in summer missions that year, not because I felt equipped and ready for the tasks ahead. I was affirmed that God's love for me and God's acceptance of me meant that I was ready for whatever I was going to face.

I have thought about this experience many times throughout the years. Whenever I feel like I don't know what I'm doing or I'm not at all prepared for the ministry task God is leading me to do, I always remember I am chosen. And there was that time that God reminded me of it – clearly and lovingly and patiently and beautifully – in an unmistakable voice.

Prayer of St. Francis

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace:
where there is hatred, let me sow love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light;
where there is sadness, joy.

O divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek
to be consoled as to console,
to be understood as to understand,
to be loved as to love.
For it is in giving that we receive,
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.
Amen.

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. 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. And one called to another and said:

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

The pivots on the thresholds shook at the voices of those who called, and the house filled with smoke. 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!”

Then one of the seraphs flew to me, holding a live coal that had been taken from the altar with a pair of tongs. 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.” 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!”

Ephesians 4:1-16

I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling: one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.

But each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore it is said,
"When he ascended on high he made captivity itself a captive;
he gave gifts to his people."

(When it says, "He ascended," what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is the same one who ascended far above all the heavens, so that he might fill all things.) The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ. We must no longer be children, tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine, by people's trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming. But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knitted together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love.