

# EPIPHANY 5

## Year C

*The Rev. Shadrack Owuor was born in Kakamega County of western Kenya. He grew up in a large Christian family, the eleventh of twelve children. His father, a retired Anglican minister, and mother, a primary school teacher, instilled in him a deep love for God. Shadrack's call to ministry began in high school, where he served in Christian Union fellowship leadership, and was strengthened when he joined youth leadership teams in his diocese, culminating in his ordination as a transitional deacon in 2008 and as a priest in 2012. Shadrack has served in pastoral and teaching roles across East Africa, including his home diocese of Butere, Uganda Martyrs Seminary in Namugongo-Uganda, and Carlile College in Nairobi. He served as director of the African Institute for Contemporary Mission and Research (AICMAR) in Kenya and as a chaplain resident at Covenant Healthcare in Saginaw, Michigan. His academic achievements include a Master of Sacred Theology from Trinity School for Ministry, a Master of Arts in Theology, and a Bachelor of Divinity from Uganda Christian University. He is currently a Doctor of Ministry student at Bexley Seabury Seminary. Shadrack is married to his wife, Aclyne, and together they remain dedicated to serving God's people. He is the rector of Grace Episcopal Church, Port Huron Michigan, in the newly formed Episcopal Diocese of the Great Lakes.*

*This Bible study is part of a series produced by the Office of Global Partnerships of The Episcopal Church.*

The readings for the Fifth Sunday after Epiphany guide us through moments of awe, confession, and transformative grace, inviting us to encounter God's glory and respond to his call. Find discussion questions at the end of this Bible study.

### Isaiah 6:1-8

6 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!”

### Commentary from Shadrack Owuor

Isaiah is overwhelmed by the majesty of God. The seraphim's cry, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory,” reveals the unmatched holiness of God. Confronted with God's splendor, Isaiah is painfully aware of his sinfulness, exclaiming, “Woe is me! I am lost.” Yet God does not leave him in despair. The seraph cleanses him with a live coal, a powerful symbol of forgiveness and purification. Set free from guilt, Isaiah responds eagerly to God's call: “Here am I; send me!”

Isaiah reminds me of our own lives, especially those moments when we feel unworthy in the face of God's holiness. However, through Christ, we are encouraged that our sins are blotted out, freeing us to embrace our calling as messengers of his love. We cannot encounter the holy God and remain the same.

## 1 Corinthians 15:1-11

**15** Now I want you to understand, brothers and sisters, the good news that I proclaimed to you, which you in turn received, in which also you stand, <sup>2</sup> through which also you are being saved, if you hold firmly to the message that I proclaimed to you—unless you have come to believe in vain.

<sup>3</sup> For I handed on to you as of first importance what I in turn had received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures <sup>4</sup> and that he was buried and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures <sup>5</sup> and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. <sup>6</sup> Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers and sisters at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died. <sup>7</sup> Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. <sup>8</sup> Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. <sup>9</sup> For I am the least of the apostles, unfit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. <sup>10</sup> But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me has not been in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I but the grace of God that is with me. <sup>11</sup> Whether then it was I or they, so we proclaim and so you believed.

### **Commentary from Shadrack Owuor**

Paul's life is a true testimony to the power of God's grace to redeem and repurpose. Although once a persecutor of the church, Paul humbly declares, "By the grace of God I am what I am."

Paul's story not only confirms that Christ's death and resurrection bring salvation to all who believe but also invites us to reflect on the ways God's grace has worked in our lives, shaping us to bear witness to the Good News.

## Luke 5:1-11

5 Once while Jesus was standing beside the Lake of Gennesaret and the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God,<sup>2</sup> he saw two boats there at the shore of the lake; the fishermen had gotten out of them and were washing their nets.<sup>3</sup> He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little way from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the crowds from the boat.<sup>4</sup> When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, “Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch.”<sup>5</sup> Simon answered, “Master, we have worked all night long but have caught nothing. Yet if you say so, I will let down the nets.”<sup>6</sup> When they had done this, they caught so many fish that their nets were beginning to burst.<sup>7</sup> So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both boats, so that they began to sink.<sup>8</sup> But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus’s knees, saying, “Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!”<sup>9</sup> For he and all who were with him were astounded at the catch of fish that they had taken,<sup>10</sup> and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. Then Jesus said to Simon, “Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people.”<sup>11</sup> When they had brought their boats to shore, they left everything and followed him.

### Commentary from Shadrack Owuor

Simon Peter’s encounter with Jesus mirrors Isaiah’s experience. After witnessing the miraculous catch of fish, Peter falls at Jesus’ feet, acknowledging his sinfulness: “Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!” But Jesus, embodying the grace of God, reassures him: “Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people.” Peter, along with James and John, leaves everything to follow Jesus.

There is a parallel between Peter’s call and that of Isaiah above. Someone once said, “God does not call the qualified, but qualifies those that he calls.” This gives me the encouragement that, although I am an ordinary, flawed individual, God can use me to do extraordinary missions. Like Peter, we are not called because of our worthiness but because of God’s transformative grace.

Both Isaiah's purification and Peter's commissioning show how God liberates his people from sin and fear, calling us into a new life of purpose and joy. These readings remind us that God's glory, forgiveness, and grace are not distant ideals but transformative realities. Will we, like Isaiah, say "Here am I; send me," or like Peter and Paul, leave behind what holds us back and wholeheartedly follow Christ?

### **Discussion Questions**

How does God's grace free you to respond to his call?

In what ways can you, like Peter, become a "fisher of people" in your daily life?

How do the holiness and love of God inspire both awe and action in you?