

Give thanks to the Lord for he is good. His love endures forever. Amen.

¹ In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple. ² Above him were seraphs, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. ³ And they were calling to one another: “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.”

⁴ At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke. ⁵ “Woe to me!” I cried. “I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty.”

⁶ Then one of the seraphs flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. ⁷ With it he touched my mouth and said, “See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for.”

⁸ 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!” **This is God’s Word.**

Dear Friends,

As historians study history they look for events that signal a change is coming. These events may be subtle at the time they happen but many have led to major events in history. Today as we consider the words of Isaiah, he starts out by pointing to an event that marks the beginning of the fall of Judah – the death of King Uzziah.

King Uzziah reigned for about 50 years and this was a very prosperous time for Judah but towards the end of his reign arrogance replaced faithfulness and the Lord afflicted him with leprosy as a result of his sins. King Uzziah’s son was faithful to the Lord and the people prospered under him but then the next king led the people down the road of idolatry. During this time Isaiah’s role changed from being an official historian of the king to being a prophet of God. That takes us to the portion of scripture before us today.

While Judah was changing and headed for destruction the vision Isaiah records reminds us that our God does not change. The angels proclaimed, **“Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God Almighty.”** As we consider that song of praise along with Isaiah, we are reminded that, “We Tremble before God because of Our Sins,” but Isaiah gives us a wonderful illustration of how, “God takes away the guilt of Sins,” and then God, “Sends Us out to Share His Message of Forgiveness.”

I. Isaiah recorded his vision with the words, **“I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple.”** I would imagine those words don’t even come close to describing what Isaiah felt as he received this glimpse of God’s glory.

Not only was God there sitting on his throne but the seraphim were poised above him. The name seraphim means “fiery beings” and so these were special angels – angels mentioned only here in the Bible by name. Note how they showed their reverence for God. These holy angels covered their faces and their feet.

They recognized that God’s glory is so great that they covered themselves in respect and humility in his presence as they carried out their duty and privilege of giving God praise. So great was their praise that the doorposts and the thresholds shook. As they sang they emphasized the holiness of God: He is set apart – infinitely separate and above all creation; He is absolutely perfect in all aspects – perfect in power, wisdom, and majesty; and He is opposite of all sin – opposing sin and all its consequences.

It is hard for us to imagine by just reading the words, but the full glory of God was very evident to Isaiah as he tried to take in everything he was seeing and hearing. As Isaiah tried to take all this in he suddenly realized how unworthy he was to see this vision of God’s glory.

“Woe to me!” I cried. “I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty.” Isaiah realizes that his sinfulness stands in sharp contrast to God’s glory. He is sinful as well as the people he lives among and serves. This is hundreds of years before the Apostle Paul would write **“the wages of sin is death,”** but Isaiah already knows that he stands before God with nothing. Later in his book he would note that, **“all our righteous acts are like filthy rags.”** As he anguished in his sins he also remembered that no one sees God and lives.

As we confessed our sins this morning our cry could have been the same as Isaiah’s. God has not revealed his glory to us in the same way he did to Isaiah but that doesn’t diminish his glory in any way and as we consider God’s glory and our sins, we too have to cry out, “Woe to me! We are people of unclean lips – sinners – living among a people of unclean lips – other sinners.” Our situation is desperate.

But then God reaches across the great gulf between Isaiah’s sinfulness and his holiness in a symbolic action to remove the guilt of Isaiah’s sins. **“Then one of the seraphs flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. ⁷ With it he touched my mouth and said, “See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for.”** The coal came from the altar – a place of sacrifice. The message was clear – your sin is atoned for because the perfect sacrifice has been made for them. That sacrifice would

happen 700 years later but it would atone for Isaiah's sins all the same. And Isaiah would prophecy about that sacrifice later in his book. This "cleansing" would keep Isaiah 'fit' for his 45 years of ministry that would follow as he warned God's people and called them to repentance.

God has reached across the great gulf between our sins and his holiness by sending his Son as the atoning sacrifice to remove our guilt. On this Trinity Sunday we see God's great glory and power in the Father, we see God's love and sacrifice in His Son who was the sacrificial lamb that takes away the sins of the world, and we see the Holy Spirit who proceeds from the Father and the Son to bring us the blessing of forgiveness through the faith the Spirit creates in our hearts.

This "cleansing" makes us not only fit to receive God's forgiveness but to go out and share that forgiveness with others.

II. Note what happens as soon as Isaiah's sins were forgiven, **"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!"** In these words we have two remarkable truths: God wants to send someone to speak for him. He could send angels and did at various times but he chooses to send us – sinful human beings, limited in so many ways and yet forgiven.

The second remarkable truth is Isaiah's willingness and quick response. Only forgiveness could cause such a remarkable transformation and such a willingness to do the Lord's will. Isaiah didn't know exactly what he was getting into but he had seen God's power and glory and he knew that God wanted to use him, an unworthy sinner to share the greatest message ever. If God was willing to forgive Isaiah and to use him, how could Isaiah say no or even hesitate to say yes.

We haven't seen God's glory in the same way Isaiah did, but we have seen God's love in action as noted in our Gospel lesson this morning that tells us how God loved us so much he sent his Son into this world for us. How can our response be any different that Isaiah's, **"Here am I Lord, send me!"**

The world around us is constantly changing but some things will remain the same forever: God's glory doesn't change. Mankind will always be sinful and unworthy. Christ Jesus has paid for the sins of the world and God brings us that forgiveness through the work of the Holy Spirit. We now have an opportunity to respond by talking about our Savior and by supporting the ministry of the Gospel. May these words of Isaiah encourage us to do so. Amen