

~~*~~ Please advance the PP slides as indicated (Thank you!)

①

WHO WILL GO FOR US?

Isaiah 6:1-13
Key Verse: 6:8

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!"

In today's passage, God reveals himself to Isaiah as the Holy God. Then he asks, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" Isaiah and his people were going through dark times. But God told Isaiah, in essence, "Arise; Shine." It was because God is bigger than their problems. Perhaps there is a dark cloud hanging over you or someone you love. I pray that, at this hour, the Holy God may reveal himself to you and talk to you personally as he did to Isaiah.

I. ISAIAH SAW THE LORD (1-4)

③

Look at verse 1. "*In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord, ...*" Isaiah's personal encounter with God happened in the year King Uzziah died in 735 B.C. Jewish tradition says Isaiah was Uzziah's cousin. So he was personally affected by the death of the king. But it wasn't only because he was close to Uzziah. A dark cloud was hanging over his people, and he was concerned about their future. Uzziah (aka Azariah) had ruled the country for 52 years, longer than any other king. He was an able king. The nation enjoyed peace and prosperity under his rule. Toward the end, however, he became proud. He entered the temple to burn incense, something that only priests were allowed to do. God struck him with leprosy which he had until he died.

With the death of the king, Judah's situation seemed rather ominous. The neighboring Edomites and the Philistines would attack and plunder his people. The northern kingdom of Israel had fallen to the invading Assyrians. Judah was the next target for the Assyrians.

The most serious threat, however, came from within. The long and prosperous reign of Uzziah was a mixed blessing for his people. Many turned away from God. Young men stayed up late at night till they were drunk (5:11). Young women walked around flirting with their eyes (3:16). Isaiah said that the head of Israel was injured (1:5).

Isaiah became pessimistic about their future. It seemed hopeless. In his despair, he made many negative comments to his friends and family. He would say, "I don't see any future for us. So what's the point of struggling to live by faith? Anyway, God doesn't seem to care." The king was dead, but Isaiah spoke as if God died.

One day, something happened to Isaiah to change his life forever. He met God personally. This encounter changed his view of God, of the world, and of himself. How did God appear to him and what did he reveal about himself?

5

First, the Lord seated on a throne. Isaiah said in verse 1. “... *I saw the Lord, high and exalted, seated on a throne; and the train of his robe filled the temple.*” In his vision, Isaiah saw the Lord Almighty, seated on his heavenly throne, high and exalted. The long train of his robe showed his authority over the world. God revealed himself to Isaiah that he was not only alive but he was in control of the universe. The world was ruled by the kings of powerful nations like Assyria. But God is the real Ruler of history. This truth made a deep impression on Isaiah. Throughout the rest of his life, he would remind his people, “Your God reigns!” (52:7) “Your God reigns!” was a message of hope he preached.

7

Second, God is holy, holy, holy. Look at verses 2-4. *Above him were seraphim, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. And they were calling to one another: “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.” At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke.* We don’t know much about the seraphim. These angels appear only here in the Bible. Each had six wings. They covered their faces with the wings. They showed their reverence to God. They covered their feet to show their humility. And they were calling to one another: “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty.” They cried, “Holy, holy, holy” three times. Why? For the Trinity God? Perhaps. What is certain is that they proclaimed the perfect holiness of God. God is holy. He is not just holy, but he is holy, holy, holy. R. C. Sproul observed that the Bible does not say that God is love, love, love, or mercy, mercy, mercy. Only regarding the holiness character of God, it says that he is holy, holy, holy.

So what does it mean God is holy? In our society, this word is often used casually, like “Holy cow, holy smokes, or holy Toledo.” But the original Hebrew word (*kedosh*) for holy means “set apart or separate.” God is set apart. God is different. He is not like the idols people worship. We live in a pluralistic culture. Some people consider God as one of many gods. But God is holy. He is a living God. Our God is high above any other. King David said, “There is no one like you, Lord, and there is no God but you” (1Ch 17:20). No one can compare with him (Ps 40:5).

9

Let me ask you. What does it mean to you personally that God is holy? The first thing we should remember about his holiness is that God is more wholesome, more powerful, more perfect than we could ever imagine. He is an infinitely awesome God. In Isaiah’s vision, at the sound of the angels calling “holy, holy, holy,” the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke. The very foundations of the temple trembled at the presence of the Holy God. Even the massive temple building reacted to the holiness of God.

Holiness is at the core of God’s character. But it is not easy for us to grasp this attribute of God. It is easier for us to accept the other characters such as his love, mercy, and compassion. His holiness is often not understood fully, or worse, not taken seriously. If you don’t take God’s holiness seriously, it is like saying you like coffee for its

taste and aroma, but ignore caffeine which is the essence of coffee. King Uzziah, for example, took God's holiness lightly. He went into the temple to burn incense, which was against the word of God. He did not listen to the priests. He was defiant. Even the angels covered their faces before the Holy God. But Uzziah became proud and angry before God. He was struck with leprosy. How about us? Unfortunately, taking the holiness of God lightly happens today as well. And the result is devastating. Some church leaders are addicted to pornography, I think mainly because they ignore the Holy God who is with them. Many of our sins are committed this way. When we fail to recognize the presence of the Holy God, we tend to take his amazing grace of salvation for granted.

10 We must know that we are in the awesome presence of the Holy God. What is even more amazing is that this awesome God is not unapproachable. In fact, he wants us to be holy, just like him. God said, "Be holy because I am holy." Shep. Nate Turnock will tell us more about this tonight. May God bless us through his message! Let me talk a little more about this. The words "Be holy because I am holy" are repeated in the book of Leviticus (11:44-45; 19:2; 20:7). It is the main theme of the book. As you know, Leviticus is not an easy book to read. Genesis has many interesting stories. Exodus also. But Leviticus is filled with many detailed laws and regulations, which seem to be obsolete for us who live in the age of grace. But it is an important book. It is the first book that the Jewish believers teach their children. In the past few years, I had three different group Bible studies on Leviticus. I find this book very relevant today because the heart of God is behind the laws. We can also find the image of Jesus in the pages of Leviticus. One thing I learned is that God does not want us to become legalistic like the Pharisees. Then why did he give his people all the laws? He wanted them to live as his holy people, following his ways, not the ways of the world. He wants us to be holy, to be different. At the same time, God himself wants to be part of our lives. God wants to be involved in all aspects of our lives. He wants to be our heavenly Father, not just when we are in church or at a Bible conference, but when we eat, sleep, play, and so on. He said, "Be holy because I am holy." To me, this is like, "Love one another because I love you." To live a holy life is to walk with God moment by moment and live according to his words. When we do this, God makes us holy through our relationship with Christ. We can grow in his holiness.

11 **Third, the whole earth is full of his glory.** Look at verse 3. *And they were calling to one another: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory."* Isaiah had thought that the world was full of violence and despair. His people were also weighed down by the burden of life. They could not see the glory of God. How about us today? Can you see the glory of God? It is not easy. We have been living with Covid-19 for more than two years now. A million people died in the U.S. alone. They say that we should expect more pandemics in the future. Meanwhile, the social divide is getting worse. Our children are killed in school. Racial tension remains high. Inflation is bad; you can feel it at the gas station. The terrible war in Ukraine is dragging on. Morally, we are headed in the wrong direction. How can we see the world full of God's glory? How can we have hope in this situation?

Isaiah didn't have the answer until he met God personally. Neither can we find the answer, until we meet the Holy God. Only God can give us true hope. When we have God in our lives, we can have a very different perspective of the world and of ourselves. When you are flying on an airplane, 40,000 feet high, the world looks very different. Likewise, when we see the world through the eyes of God, things look different. We can see that this earth is more than a place where we struggle everyday to pay the bills and end up in the cemetery. We can see that the Holy God put us here in this world, at this time of history, so that we may live a life of faith that glorifies his name, and when all is done, join him in heaven.

II. YOUR GUILT IS TAKEN AWAY (5-7)

13
15

Isaiah saw the Lord Almighty on his throne. He met the Holy God personally. How did the encounter change his life? Look at verse 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."* Before the Holy God, Isaiah found himself. God is holy; he was not. Imagine a bride wearing a beautiful wedding dress on her wedding day. Then imagine her white dress is ruined by a ketchup spill. Isaiah felt like he was a ketchup stain before the Holy God. This is what happens to a person who meets God personally. Before this encounter with God, Isaiah had considered himself a pretty good man. He thought he was a little better than others. But before the Holy God, he had to admit he was a sinner. The first thing he realized was that he was a man of unclean lips. And he lived among a people of unclean lips.

17

We also live among a people of unclean lips. People swear a lot. How many times do you hear swearing words even in a PG13 movie? They use the name of our Lord in vain. Some children use the profane language and think it's cool to do that. This is bad, but what makes us a people of unclean lips is not just the filthy language. It is speaking the words of despair and hopelessness as if God were dead.

19

In her book called "The Mother," the Nobel prize winning author Pearl S. Buck remembers what her mother said when she was growing up. At the age of 22, her mother went to China to serve a difficult mission with her husband. They suffered hunger and disease. She had seven children but four of them died in her arms. But she never uttered any words of despair. Pearl Buck recalls how her mother would tell her many stories of faith and hope despite their situation. She was a woman of God. And she showed it by what she said and by what she did not say.

"Woe to me!" Isaiah cried. "I am ruined!" It was his desperate cry to ask God to forgive him for using his mouth to utter the words of unbelief. He repented his unbelief, and for his bad influence on others by speaking unbelieving words. As you heard this morning from Shep. Joshua Kim, Simon Peter had a similar reaction when he met Jesus personally. He exclaimed: "Go away from me Lord, I am a sinful man."

21 What did God do for Isaiah upon his repentance? Look at verses 6-7. *Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. With it he touched my mouth and said, "See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for."* Something amazing happened to Isaiah. An angel touched his mouth with a live coal. It was a symbolism that God burned away his guilt. The angel declared that his sin was atoned for. His life of unclean lips was not a small matter. It was a sinful life. Isaiah's problem was not his human situation. Nor it was Assyria. It was his sin. And God took away his sin and guilt. This is a spiritual secret we should know. God forgives us when we confess our sins and believe in Jesus. He makes us new person by the fire of the Holy Spirit. Do you know that God gave us this promise, in writing? 1 John 1:9 says, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." With a live coal, God cleansed Isaiah's lips. From then on, Isaiah would proclaim the word of God with his lips.

III. "WHOM SHALL I SEND?" (8-13)

25 Look at verse 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!"* Isaiah was wrong in thinking that God didn't care about his people. God is not indifferent toward his people. Seated on a heavenly throne, he sees what's going on in this world and in our lives. And he cares about us. The Lord said: "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" It was the voice of the compassionate God. He was looking for a servant who could deliver his message to the people living in darkness. God wanted Isaiah to know his broken heart for the people. God wanted him to volunteer to go with a willing heart.

What was Isaiah's response? He said, "Here am I. Send me!" He understood the heart of God. He was willing and ready to go. Isaiah made a decision. He did not waver. He said, "Here am I. Send me!" God blessed his decision. Isaiah became a major prophet in the Old Testament who prophesied the coming of the Messiah, our Lord Jesus!

27 How about you? How would you respond to God's calling? Would you say, "Well, right now I am so busy with my school and job that I don't have time for anything else"? Or would you say, "God's work is for pastors and missionaries. I am only an ordinary believer." You might think you are too young or too old to do God's work. Or you might say, "There are more than 7 billion people in the world and I am only one." Well, do you know what Dwight Moody said about that? He said, "I am only one, but I am one. I cannot do everything, but I can do something. And that which I can do, by the grace of God, I will do!" God blessed Moody to make a difference in many people's lives.

29 Actually, there are many among us here who heard God's calling and responded as Isaiah did. Two years ago, M. Joshua Kim was a middle-aged IT specialist at the UMD campus. But he and his wife Ruth decided to move to Delaware to start a campus ministry. He took a substantial pay cut by taking an entry level job there. Normally people change jobs to get a better one. But he did the opposite. Why? It was because he

remembered a prayer by God's servant a long time ago for him to pioneer Delaware. We can say that he heard God's personal calling, "Who will go for us?" I also pray that all of us who are here, especially young people who have so much potential, may come to know the heart of God, and respond to his calling, as Isaiah did.

Verses 9-13 tell us about the conversation between God and Isaiah. Let me summarize it quickly. God told Isaiah that his stubborn people would not pay attention to his preaching. His mission would be very difficult. Isaiah asked: "For how long, Lord?" God's answer was not encouraging. He told Isaiah that his people would have to suffer extreme devastation and even an exile to a faraway country. How difficult was Isaiah's mission? People would not listen to his preaching. To get their attention, he even went around naked for three years. Still they did not open their ears. Our campus mission today is just as difficult. We give our hearts to raising disciples of Jesus. But we are disappointed again and again. We feel like asking, "For how long, Lord?" What is God's answer?

31 The Lord said in verse 13, "*But as the terebinth and oak leave stumps when they are cut down, so the holy seed will be the stump in the land.*" The holy seed would be the remnant of Israel! The holy seed would sprout and bear the fruit of salvation. God is the God of hope. He does not abandon his people. He does not give up on us. He does not give up on our Bible students. He is the God who demonstrated his love for us by sending his one and only Son to die for us while we were still sinners (Ro 5:8). Our mission life may look a failure in human eyes. But our life of faith and obedience will never be a failure. God will not forget our love for our Bible students, our prayers and tears for them, and the time we spend with them.

33 In conclusion, the Holy God wants us to see the world through his eyes. We don't have to despair because God is with us. He wants us to know his broken heart towards those who are wandering in the darkness of sin. He asks each of the question, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" He wants us to rise up and shine his light. May God help us to respond to him personally!