

Text: Isaiah 6:1-8

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!"

Prayer of the Day:

Almighty God and Father, dwelling in majesty and mystery, filling and renewing all creation by your eternal Spirit, and manifesting your saving grace through our Lord Jesus Christ: in mercy cleanse our hearts and lips that, free from doubt and fear, we may ever worship you, one true immortal God, with your Son and the Holy Spirit, living and reigning, now and forever. Amen.

Verse of the Day:

Alleluia. Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory. Alleluia. (Isaiah 6:3b cf. NIV)

Sermon Text:

The mysteries of the Holy Trinity are as far and wide as they are deep. My brain hurts just trying to contemplate the way it all works. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, three persons and yet somehow one God. I think I understand but in a few moments, we will confess the Athanasian Creed, one of the three main Ecumenical Creeds of the Christian Church. The negative statements, the "is not's" are like hammer blows to my understanding, shattering any attempt on the part of my mind to wrap itself around who God is. The positive "is" statements leave me feeling as if I should be able to speak of Him clearly, understand Him completely yet even talking about it makes my head ache.

I think that's why this lesson always amazes me. In the year that King Uzziah died (mid-late 700 BC), Isaiah sees Him. So majestic is the Lord that the train of His robe fills the temple. Think power and majesty that simply goes beyond anything we can contemplate. The scene is as awesome as it is terrifying. And the angels ... Seraphim ... shaking the doorposts and thresholds of heaven itself as they address Him, their song becomes our theme as we stand with Isaiah in the presence of God this Holy Trinity Sunday, "**Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty!**"

Contemplate it with me for just a second. Angels, powerful spirits who wage war against the dark and spiritual forces of evil that plague us and leave us shrieking for help. So holy and mighty that John collapses in worship in their presence in the book of Revelation (19:10) only to be rebuked for trying to worship that which is not God. So powerful are they that one in the book of Daniel can subdue the hungry Lions which by all rights should have devoured Daniel like a donut when thrown to them. And these, they are Seraphim, special angels we hear of that are specially designed to stand, or fly I suppose, in the very presence of God.

But notice something even about these heavenly creatures, six wings are needed! Even they are not holy enough to be in the presence of God without covering their faces, "*for no one can see God and live* (Exodus 33:20)" and those feet, far less dirty and repugnant than my own. Yes, even these are not worthy to stand in the presence of God uncovered.

So what does Isaiah do? *“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.”* Turns out, I’m in good company! Standing in the presence of the Triune God Isaiah has more than a headache because of what his eyes have seen and his ears have heard. The prophet is overcome by his own sin and unworthiness in the presence of this God. Yes, whenever I would contemplate the most powerful being in all creation, I am reminded that I lack wings enough to cover my offenses and sins. Even just one part, the mouth can’t stay clean enough to exist in the presence of God. The sin of the sum of my parts is as hard to fully contemplate as is the God who sits before Isaiah. How can I ever hope to understand it all?

Brothers and sisters, God doesn’t reveal Himself – at least in the doctrine of the Trinity – so that we can perfectly understand Him. He reveals Himself so that we might see the truth, we have a God who is utterly beyond us. Even these amazing Seraphim pale in comparison. And as their voices shake the very foundations of heaven, I see it, God is everything that I am not. With Isaiah I must confess that I am unworthy, unworthy even to contemplate His holy being.

But this is not the only reason God would reveal Himself to us. In fact, it isn’t even the chief reason. One of the Seraphs does more than hover around the holiness that is our Triune God. *Then one of the seraphs 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.”* And there it is. All three persons of the Trinity would have you saved.

Move for a brief moment away from this throne room and the awe-inspiring scenes therein and move instead to a quiet night in Jerusalem. One of the persons of the Holy Trinity is there which is to say even though, He has veiled the glory all of God is present. I know headache. As Jesus speaks He is completely blowing Nicodemus’ mind. But while Jesus talks of the love of the Father and the work of the Spirit, He unleashes that most celebrated of all Bible passages. Say it with me if you want, I should make our graduates do it all alone, but lest they start crying out Woes of their own in the blankness of their minds as Pastor puts them on the spot maybe together is fine. Ready? *“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16)”*

See Him in there? God, (that’s the Father) so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son (you surely got that one), that whoever believed in Him (after Pentecost we know that though we may not always see Him or hear Him his work gives Him away, that’s the Spirit working in Word and Sacraments) and when it all focuses on us by grace and through faith we shall not perish but have eternal life. This, dear friends, is why God would reveal Himself to us. It’s why He reveals Himself to Isaiah. He wants us to be His, to with Him for all eternity.

And then, well nothing is more amazing than what we just described but more astonishment awaits. For God speaks, *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!”* Ah, yes, the Church, the Church leaps into being and is it not amazing? God would have us do work which He is ever so much more perfectly suited for. But instead of terrifying the masses in His holiness, we send messengers. Instead of blowing our minds because our eyes and ears can contemplate Him, He veils His glory. He commissions us to work for Him. To pick up in our hands the very Word which He has inspired, and to partake of the very Sacrament He has left us, to open lips which are completely unworthy even to speak His name and see, see Him work through us, work for us as others believe and are saved as others minds are blown by the grace and mercy of God who is everything that we are not but in His grace, makes us more than we should ever be.

I don’t have a set of wings let alone all of them that I need to cover my sinfulness, but that’s okay God has taken away my guilt and atoned for every sin. So even though my voice isn’t half as impressive as those of the Seraphim, I’ll join ‘em, ***“Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.”*** Amen!