

Trinity Sunday
Isaiah 6:1-8
Sermon #691
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Erich Jonathan Hoeft

¹In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple. ²Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. ³And one called to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!"

⁴And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke. ⁵And I said: "Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!"

⁶Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a burning coal that he had taken with tongs from the altar. ⁷And he touched my mouth and said: "Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for."

⁸And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" Then I said, "Here I am! Send me."

In the name of our triune God, dear children of God,

Within moments of beginning our public worship together we use the name of the triune God. In the versicles we sang "glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost." We also do at the beginning of the Divine Service Rite Two when we ask God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit to bless our worship. We say; "In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." With this greeting and invocation we call on our triune God to be with us and we declare that everything done in this service revolves around Him.

But our public worship is not the only place where that name of the triune God is invoked. The invoking of that name at the beginning of our public worship is a vivid reminder that His name has been placed upon each of us at our baptisms. According to Jesus' command we were baptized into "the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." That means that not only here in this place we call the house of the Lord does everything revolve around Him, but also in our individual lives outside this time of public worship. It means that what was true for Isaiah in our reading is

true for you! In the vision God gave Isaiah to call him into service as a prophet of the Lord, Isaiah was taken into the presence of the God about whom the angels were singing, "**Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts!**" Isaiah was in the presence of this "three-times holy" God, the God who reveals Himself as the one and only God who within that one God exists as three distinct persons. You are in His presence, too! Every moment of every day

YOU'RE IN THE PRESENCE OF THE THREE-TIMES HOLY GOD!

That means a couple things for your life.

1. You live in fear.
2. You live willingly in His service.

Isaiah saw several "odd" sights in his vision. The seraphs were certainly different. They are angels, but the significance of the title "seraph" is unknown. It may be a rank among the angels; perhaps a higher rank. Perhaps their service to the Lord is to simply be in His presence and declare His praise. We don't know. But do you notice how these sinless creatures live in fear. The fear in which they live is the fear of God. This is not "terror" fear. This is "respect and awe" fear. These sinless creatures of God demonstrated their fear with their action. Isaiah described them as having six wings. "**With two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew.**" While sinless, they know that they are blessed creatures of God; not equal, but subject to Him. They fear Him. They are in awe of Him. They have perfect respect for Him because of His blessings upon them.

This is the fear that motivates obedience to God's will. For that reason Martin Luther used this term in his explanations of the Ten Commandments we learn in Catechism class: "We should FEAR and love God so that we ..." This fear was in Isaiah, but not at first.

Isaiah certainly was filled with fear when he realized that he was in the presence of the God the seraphs declared to be three-times holy. Terror was smiting his conscience through the knowledge of his sin against this holy

God. He expressed his fear with the words "**Woe is me! For I am lost.**" He explained his fear by confessing, "**I am a man of unclean lips.**" He knew that the unclean words that came from his lips proceeded from an unclean heart that was offensive to the holy God. Such a terror exists in every human being. 21st Century people also have to confess, "I am a person of unclean lips." We, too, are guilty of having lips that declare the praises of the three-time holy God when we are here in this building, but too easily speak lies and hurtful words outside of it. Our lips and other members of our bodies regularly expose unclean hearts that too often cherish wealth and praise of people more than the love of our three times holy God. When we, like Isaiah, recognize that we are always in the presence of this three-time holy God, that there is no escaping His oversight of our lives, we then live in fear.

But another strange thing happened in Isaiah's vision that turned his terror-fear into awe-fear. One of the seraphs brought a live, burning coal from the altar in the vision. He touched it to Isaiah's lips and declared, "**Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for.**" From that altar of sacrifice came purification of heart and lips. Isaiah had done nothing to deserve it. From the three-times holy God came the cleansing necessary to be in His presence without being destroyed. How awesome that He would do that for Isaiah!

Isaiah would later prophesy how such cleansing would be accomplished. The Lord Himself would take on the form of a servant; he would take on humanity. This servant would suffer the destruction deserved by every human with unclean heart and lips. From the altar of a cross on which this suffering servant would endure the three-times holy God's angry judgment on our sin would come cleansing for filthy and offensive hearts and lips. It's all there is Isaiah's 53rd chapter. This loving and saving activity of the three-time holy God awed Isaiah. It awes me as well. This three-times holy God loves you and me enough to carry out such a cleansing so that we may be blessed in His presence. That thought staggers the imagination. The holy Father made you and arranged to get you back. He sent His holy Son, the "second holy" of this three-times holy God, to take humanity into His Godhood and live the pure life we haven't and die the awful death of punishment for our sin. Sent out by the holy Father and the holy Son, the

Holy Spirit has penetrated our cold, hard hearts and turned them to fear, love and trust in this triune God who has put His name on us. You're in the presence of the three-times holy God, enjoying His blessings of forgiveness and life. That He would do this for you and me is almost as great a mystery as the Trinity Himself! This truth filled Isaiah, and it fills you and me with awe. Yes, because you are in the presence of the three-times holy God, you live in fear.

That fear, awe, respect of this three-times holy God really affected Isaiah. Being in the blessed presence of this God made Isaiah willing to live in His service. Isaiah seemed to be recording this vision in which the Lord called him into service as a prophet to back up the message he was bringing to the people of Israel and Judah. After hearing about Isaiah's call from God, hopefully the people would accept his message as it indeed was, God's message to them. The opening words of our section are helpful here. The phrase "**In the year that King Uzziah died**" does more than just give us the date of Isaiah's vision and call (which was probably around 750 BC). That phrase, in giving us a time frame also gives us a glimpse of life among the people of Israel and Judah. King Uzziah was king of Judah, the southern kingdom. He was one of the last "good" kings of Judah. Under his long reign there was outward prosperity. There was also, more importantly, worship of the true God. He led the people in this. But King Uzziah's death marked the beginning of the spiritual, and eventually the political decline of Judah. Isaiah had been called to live among and speak God's message to a people who would be walking away from the Lord and His will. It would not be an easy task.

Yet, having stood in the presence of, as Isaiah said, "**the King, the LORD of hosts!**", Isaiah could do nothing in response to the Lord's question about who would go for Him but say, "**Here am I. Send me.**" Having seen the King, Isaiah would willingly live in His service. Among people of unclean lips and hearts Isaiah would live willingly according to the Lord's will. To those fellow Jews who were wandering from the paths of blessing of the Lord God, Isaiah would speak willingly the Lord's message of condemnation for their sins and His gracious forgiveness in the coming Messiah.

You've seen the King! As we gather around His word we are permitted to see Him in all His majesty and grace. As you kneel at His altar He brings His grace and forgiveness to you through His special supper in which the very body and blood of Jesus offered on the altar of the cross brings you His personal assurance of forgiveness and life. When you've seen the King and heard Him speak to you, what else can you say but "**Here am I. Send me.**"?

In his mercy He has brought you into his blessed presence! He has even put His name on you and declared you to be His child forever in holy Baptism! That moves you also to live willingly in His service. As you leave here you will be going back to your homes, neighborhoods, jobs, and play. There you will find people just like you, people with unclean lips and hearts. However, many of them don't have through faith in the three-times holy God the cleansing that makes being in His presence an awesome blessing rather than a dreadful curse. In actions of obedience to His will you willingly declare the praise of your three-times holy God. With words of God you call to brothers and sisters in Christ who are wandering and invite those who don't know Him to meet Him. Such a life of service you will be leaving this time of public worship to continue.

And just as we began in the name of the three-times holy God, so we will go in His name and with His blessing. We will go assured of His blessing with these words: "The LORD (1) bless you and keep you. The LORD (2) make His face shine on you and be gracious to you. The LORD (3) lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace." May these words remind you that always you're in the presence of the three-times holy God. With such a reminder may you live in His fear and willingly in His service!
Amen.