
MY EYES HAVE SEEN THE KING, THE LORD OF HOSTS

Sermon for Trinity Sunday, 2018

Isaiah 6:1-8

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is the First Reading from before, Isaiah 6:1-8: **¹ In the year when King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a high and lofty throne. The train of His robe was filling the Temple. ² Seraphs were standing above Him. Each had six wings; each was using two wings to cover his face; each was using two wings to cover his legs; and each was using two wings to fly. ³ The one was calling to the other and saying: “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts! His glory fills the whole earth!” ⁴ The voices of those who were calling out caused the foundations of the doorposts to shake, and the Temple was filled with smoke. ⁵ Then I said: “How terrible for me! For I have been brought to silence. For I am a man with unclean lips and live among people with unclean lips. For my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.” ⁶ Then one of the seraphs flew to me, with a glowing coal in his hand. He had used tongs to take it from the altar. ⁷ He touched my mouth with it and said: “Look! This has touched your lips. Your guilt has been taken away, and your sin has been atoned for.” ⁸ Then 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!”**

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth, Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

When we go to sleep, we dream. Some dreams are rather realistic, some dreams are just rubbish, but no matter what we dream, when we wake up, these dreams disappear. They aren't real.

There are wonderful thoughts and pictures that pass in review before Isaiah's mind in our text, but they are no dream, and Isaiah is not the victim of his own imagination. He has a vision in which he experiences a manifestation of God.

This was not an altogether unique experience in the Bible. Other children of God had the privilege of being given visions of God too, and how satisfying these experiences must have been, and what a clear and vivid revelation of God those people must have received to whom they were granted!

Our relationship to God, too, must be more than a dream. It is a vision that we need to have. By faith we, like Isaiah, must be able to say: **For my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts**. We, too, must have seen Him in His majestic holiness, His forgiving mercy, and His enabling grace.

In his vision Isaiah says, ¹ **In the year when King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a high and lofty throne. The train of His robe was filling the Temple.** When we hear of the Lord 'sitting on a high and lofty throne,' perhaps we are reminded of Jesus' ascension a few short weeks ago. But this vision Isaiah had was long before Jesus even came down from heaven. So, did Isaiah see Jesus? Later on Isaiah would record the LORD God saying, "*Look! My Servant will be successful. He will be high, be lifted up, and be highly exalted,*" (Is. 52:13). That certainly does refer to Jesus. In his Gospel, in chapter 12, John quotes Isaiah's words from this chapter and says, "*Isaiah said these things because he saw Jesus' glory and spoke about Him,*" (12:41). In his vision, Isaiah saw Christ in His glory.

However, we know that this vision of Isaiah involved the Trinity, because we hear one seraph call out to the other saying, "**Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts! His glory fills the whole earth!**" In Hebrew, repetition expresses a superlative; God is supremely holy, but this threefold repetition is also evocative of the three persons of the Trinity. Thus, the three-fold cry of the seraph emphasises the majestic holiness of the Triune God. It tells us that holy is He who has created us and by the gift of His Son has made it possible for us to worship Him in spirit and in truth. Holy is He who by His perfect life and

saving death has redeemed us from our sins, washing them away in the flood of His blood and equipping us to live our lives unto Him. Holy is He who from day to day sanctifies us through the Gospel and makes us righteous in the sight of God.

This same truth is also to be found in the last verse of the text. Here the Lord, when speaking of Himself, uses the plural and asks, “**who will go for Us?**” At creation God had said, “*Let Us make man in Our image,*” (Gen. 1:26). And when the Lord God closed the Garden of Eden to man after his fall into sin, it was done lest man should become “*like one of Us,*” (Gen. 3:22). The only reason such grammar is used is because God is Three and He is One at the same time. With the vision of Isaiah, we bring together into one focal point the wonders of Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost and see our King in His holiness, in His mercy, and in His enabling grace.

In his vision Isaiah also sees a number of seraphs - exalted creatures who are ministering spirits, ready to carry out the will of God. **Each had six wings; each was using two wings to cover his face; each was using two wings to cover his legs; and each was using two wings to fly,** all the while singing to the glory of the Lord, “**Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts! His glory fills the whole earth!**” What attribute could be more essential to God’s glory than His holiness? As He is removed from all sin in His holiness, so He is exalted far above everything that is finite; and wherever one looks, all over the earth, there is evidence of His glory, though natural man does not see it. But how could the prophet doubt it after seeing the effect of the song of the seraph? It was so vibrant, so rich and powerful in its vibrations, that it **caused the foundations of the doorposts to shake.**

Have your eyes “**seen the King**”? We cannot, of course, look upon Him in His full divine glory. We cannot look upon the essence of His nature. So far as our understanding of God is concerned, in this life He must always remain the King eternal, immortal, invisible.

And yet we must see Him. We must have a vision of God. Isaiah was given this vision in order to strengthen his faith and to assure him of the things which would be revealed to him, and what he saw has been revealed to us in Scripture so that by faith we may see the glory of God.

Seeing this vision, Isaiah is moved to exclaim: **“How terrible for me! For I have been brought to silence. For I am a man with unclean lips and live among people with unclean lips. For my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.”** This revelation of God produces a feeling of woe, terror, and impending destruction in the heart of Isaiah. “I’m done for!” he thinks. He is simply terrified when he compares himself with the holiness of God and must confess: “I am a sinner.”

Seeing the Lord brings Isaiah to a realisation of his own sin. God’s holiness separates Him from sinners. His almighty power threatens every sinner with eternal separation and punishment. Isaiah stood before God empty-handed. He could offer the One on the throne nothing to bridge the great difference. Isaiah’s best is nothing in the presence of God’s absolute holiness and power. It would have been presumptuous for Isaiah to suggest that he has tried to live as the Lord wanted. The prophet’s works of service, as valuable as they were, made no difference here. He was unclean and lived among sinners.

Isaiah feared because his eyes had **seen the King, the LORD of hosts**, and he knew that no one can see God and live.¹ But God had chosen to reveal Himself to the prophet. The vision was for the benefit of Isaiah, for the benefit of his ministry, and also for us. The Lord grants the vision to this sinful man by undeserved love. He will not die but will live.

The Lord Himself reached across the difference between His holiness and Isaiah’s sin. He took away the guilt of the prophet in a symbolic action. **One of the seraphs flew to me, with a glowing coal in his hand. He had used tongs to take it from the altar.** ⁷ **He touched my mouth with it and said: “Look! This has touched your lips. Your guilt has been taken away, and your sin has been atoned for.”**

The message of absolution was absolutely clear. Isaiah’s sins are forgiven, his impurity is purged, and he is freed from his iniquity. His forgiveness of sin is that forgiveness which comes through faith in Christ and His saving death on the cross for sinners. Isaiah was assured that he could stand before **the LORD of hosts** because of the cleansing of Jesus. His status was changed by

¹ Exodus 33:20

God's act, not by any human effort or desire. It was by grace, not by works; it is *always* by grace and not by works.

Surely, we also have reason to come before the LORD to confess that we are people of unclean lips. We have spoken words that have their origin in a sinful heart. We deserve nothing but punishment, and unless we have seen ourselves in this light, unless we have felt ourselves unfit, we shall never be fit for any great service.

However, once we have made this confession and pleaded for forgiveness, it will be followed by the cleansing of the Lord. God's seraph will then fly to us, too, to purify us. He will bring us a burning, purifying "coal" from the throne of God and so assure us that through the merits of Christ also our sin has been taken away and purged.

There is no doubt about it: God will be merciful to those who come to Him. Those who humble themselves before the Lord in sincere, heartfelt repentance will be exalted. Those who are bowed down with terror and awe at the sight of God's glory will again be lifted up by the power of God's grace. They will have their souls fired with love of God in Christ that their lips and lives may be purged from the filth of sin.

Is this grace available for us? Yes, just as it was for Isaiah. The Lord Jesus seeks to make Himself known through His Word to you and to me and to all men. *He wants all to come to the knowledge of the truth and be saved.*²

The holy Son of God has poured out His lifeblood for you, so confess your uncleanness and receive His pardon. Then you will have the privilege not only of being with Him some day in the glory of heaven but also of seeing Him here and now in His enabling grace.

So, Isaiah, who is a sinful man, is not only assured of the grace of God in Christ and the forgiveness of all his sins, but with this grace and forgiveness the **LORD of hosts** also bestows on him new strength and equips and enables him for His service. Isaiah reports: ⁷ **He touched my mouth with it and said: "Look! This has touched your lips. Your guilt has been taken away, and your sin has been atoned for."** ⁸ **Then I heard the voice of the Lord,**

² 1 Timothy 2:4

saying: “Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?” Then I said, “Here I am. Send me!”

The call, of course, is for volunteers who are willing to proclaim the reconciliation which has just been granted to Isaiah in his vision. The vision impresses on us that a man’s realisation of his sinfulness does not exclude him from the service of God.

Isaiah receives a distinct mission. **The voice of the Lord** contains the call to the prophet to be the messenger of the Triune God. He is to go and speak for the Triune God. He is to denounce sin, and to proclaim forgiveness for those who believe. For this work God requires men. He could have used angels, but He chose to use men, and He made the response to His call the acid test for the loyalty of the church.

Isaiah answers the Lord with: **“Here I am. Send me!”** He does not first ask: “Were You speaking to me?” No, Isaiah offers himself. His answer is immediate. There is no hesitation. The answer is unreserved. A ready answer, growing out of deep devotion, comes from that heart which was so lately overwhelmed. Out of weakness Isaiah has been made strong.

This is altogether as God wants it to be. There are demands which He makes of us all who are His believing children. He expects that we be attentive when He speaks, that we trust in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Saviour, that we be willing to endure persecution for His name’s sake, and that we be diligent in the work of extending His kingdom through the spreading of His Word. Isaiah is now ready to be the messenger of the Lord. He has experienced the grace of forgiveness, and now desires to share the riches of the Gospel with others. Isaiah does not say: “Send me if it isn’t too hard,” or “Send me if the salary isn’t too low,” or, “I would go if I thought I would have success.” No, he says, **“Here I am. Send me,”** and he leaves the success to God.

However, the spirit that moves Isaiah to cry out, **“Here I am. Send me!”** without figuring the cost or the resources available, was really not that of Isaiah. It was the Spirit of the Lord. He had changed Isaiah into a ready worker. He had told the prophet to “go” and be His messenger; and when God says, “Go!” He enables one to do so. Isaiah’s dedication and willingness to volunteer was the result of his having seen **the Lord sitting on a high and**

lofty throne. It was the result of having seen the Lord not only in His awesome holiness but also in the glory of His forgiving grace. Now he was aware of God's forgiving love, and he was ready for the Lord's assignment.

Have your eyes seen the King in His enabling grace so that you have been equipped to serve Him? We need to climb the mountains of prayer on our pilgrimage through life. From these we will get a vision of the faraway heavenly city, and then no task will be too difficult, no cost too great. At first, we may be filled with a feeling of helplessness, but this will change to humble dependence on divine strength. Then, as the seraphs were at all times ready to fly away to carry out the missions of God, so we will be ready and willing to do His work.

If we are not ready to go for the Lord, then we must examine our hearts once more. We must ask ourselves some soul-searching questions, such as: "What kind of vision of the Lord have I had?" "Have my eyes really seen the King?" "Do I truly believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as my Saviour from sin?" We need to ask ourselves these questions, asking the Holy Spirit to guide our hearts and enable us to "say that Jesus Christ is Lord."³ Once we are able to answer these questions in the affirmative, then we will also be enabled to respond to the Lord's call for volunteers with: "**Here I am. Send me!**"

Life can be lived to the fullest only after we have learned to say: "**My eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.**" When we have trod the slopes of Calvary and stood at the cross of Jesus, when we have seen the limitless love of Christ, our God and Lord, and through faith in Him **have seen the King, the LORD of hosts** - in His majestic holiness, in His forgiving mercy, and in His enabling grace - then there will be no question about our response to the voice of God.

Then someday, having served the Lord with unselfishness and devotion here on earth, we will be granted the heavenly vision of God in another life. No tongue can tell just what that will be like, of course. As St. Paul says: "*no eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has comprehended, what God has prepared for those who love Him,*" (1 Cor. 2:9). For now, we can only lean on

³ 1 Corinthians 12:3

what He tells us in His holy Word. But then we shall see face to face. That will be glory indeed. Until then, let us continue in our worship of the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

PRAYER FOR TRINITY SUNDAY

We praise You, O God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, for You are from everlasting to everlasting. We adore You as the Lord of all, clothed with majesty and honour. We sing Your praise, and humbly bring You our prayers.

We thank You for the truth by which we have come to know You, and for the mercy by which we have come to love You. We thank You for the ability and privilege to praise You, the one, true, eternal, immortal, invisible God in whom we live, move, and exist.

We bless You, heavenly Father, that the universe that you have made is good and wonderful, and that the things that You have made reveal Your power and wisdom.

We worship You, O Christ, only Son of the Father. For when You were lifted up on the cross You drew all people to Yourself, so that whoever believes in You might not die, but have eternal life. We praise You that, at the right hand of the Father, You govern all things for the benefit of Your church. Continue to intercede with the Father for us, Your people.

We praise You, O Holy Spirit that You have called us by the Gospel, and have led us to the saving truth of Jesus the Son. We praise You for gathering us into Your church and making us holy by Your grace. We thank You for making us alive in Christ by Baptism and faith, and for renewing our hearts and lives.

Gracious God, continue to open to us Your Holy Scriptures, that we may grow in our understanding of Your will, serve You more acceptably, and love and obey You better. Give us an ever clearer view of Jesus our Saviour, so that we may rejoice in Your love and mercy more and more, and always trust You completely for everything.

Live in Your Church, O Lord, and make people and pastors eager to fulfil their roles in Your kingdom. Cleanse Your church from all error, weakness,

strife, and disobedience. Make us strong in faith and good works, and give us a strong hope in all Your rich promises.

Loving Lord, You have made us Your own; keep us close to You all our days. Give us unceasing joy in Christ's forgiveness and salvation, and confirm us in the new life of the Spirit, until that day dawns, when Your kingdom will come in all its fullness.

Then grant that we may see You face to face, and perfectly love and praise You, our gracious God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in the ages to come. Amen.

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST (HOLY TRINITY)

Isaiah 6:1-8

¹ In the year when King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a high and lofty throne. The train of His robe was filling the Temple. ² Seraphs were standing above Him. Each had six wings; each was using two wings to cover his face; each was using two wings to cover his legs; and each was using two wings to fly. ³ The one was calling to the other and saying: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts! His glory fills the whole earth!"

⁴ The voices of those who were calling out caused the foundations of the doorposts to shake, and the Temple was filled with smoke. ⁵ Then I said: "How terrible for me! For I have been brought to

silence. For I am a man with unclean lips and live among people with unclean lips. For my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts."

⁶ Then one of the seraphs flew to me, with a glowing coal in his hand. He had used tongs to take it from the altar. ⁷ He touched my mouth with it and said: "Look! This has touched your lips. Your guilt has been taken away, and your sin has been atoned for."

⁸ Then 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!"

Acts 2:14a, 22-36

¹⁴ Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed them: ...

²² "Men of Israel, listen to these words! Jesus of Nazareth was a

Man whom God commended to you, as you yourselves know, by miracles, wonders and miraculous signs, which God worked among you through Him.²³ This Man was handed over to you by God's set plan and foreknowledge, and you, with the hands of wicked men, nailed Him to a cross and put Him to death.²⁴ Nevertheless, God raised Him and loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible for death to hold Him.²⁵ For David says about Him: 'I have continually been foreseeing the Lord before Me. For He is at My right hand, that I may not be shaken.²⁶ For this reason My heart is glad, and My tongue rejoices; yes, even My body will rest in hope.²⁷ For You will not abandon My soul to Hades or allow Your Holy One to see decay.²⁸ You have made the paths of life known to Me. You will fill Me with joy through Your presence.'²⁹ Brethren, I can tell you frankly that our ancestor David died and was buried, and his grave is with us to this day.³⁰ Therefore, because David was a prophet and knew that God had sworn to him by an oath to cause one of his descendants to sit on his

throne,³¹ he saw what would come and said concerning the resurrection of the Christ that He was not abandoned to the grave and that His body did not experience decay.³² This One, Jesus, God has raised, and of that fact we are all witnesses.

³³ "Therefore, after He has been lifted up by God's right hand and has received the promised Holy Spirit from the Father, He has poured out this, which you both see and hear.³⁴ For it was not David who went up to heaven, but he says himself: 'The Lord said to my Lord: "Sit at My right hand,³⁵ until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet.'"

³⁶ "Therefore, all the people of Israel should know for certain that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, Lord and Christ!"

John 3:1-17

¹ There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews.² He came to Jesus by night and said to Him, "Rabbi, we know that You have come from God as a teacher. For no one can do these miraculous signs, which You are doing, unless God is with him."

³ Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I tell you, unless anyone is

born from above, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

⁴ Nicodemus asked Him, “How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born, can he?”

⁵ Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I tell you, unless anyone is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. ⁶ What has been born of the sinful human nature is sinful human nature, but what has been born of the Spirit is spirit. ⁷ Do not be astonished that I have told you, ‘You people must be born from above!’ ⁸ The wind blows where it pleases, and you hear the sound of it but do not know where it is coming from or where it is going. It is like that with everyone who has been born of the Spirit.”

⁹ Nicodemus answered Him, “How can these things be?”

¹⁰ Jesus answered him, “Are you the teacher of Israel without knowing these things? ¹¹ Truly, truly, I tell you, We speak what We know and testify to what We have seen, and you people do not accept Our testimony. ¹² If I have told you people earthly things, and you do not believe, how will you believe if

I tell you heavenly things? ¹³ No one has gone up into heaven except the One who has come down from heaven, the Son of Man. ¹⁴ As Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, ¹⁵ that everyone who believes in Him may have eternal life. ¹⁶ For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that everyone who believes in Him might not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God has not sent His Son into the world to condemn the world but that the world may be saved through Him. ¹⁸ The person who believes in Him is not condemned, but the person who does not believe has already been condemned, because he has not believed in the name of God’s only Son.