

Isaiah 6:1-8

Epiphany 5; February 6, 2022

Sometimes, it's hard to imagine just how big something is until you see it with your own eyes. Have you ever seen the Grand Canyon? As you enter the National Park, it is hard to get even a small glimpse of what lies ahead of you. You park your car, you walk up to where you can see it, and you can't believe just how big it is. Your only reaction is "wow." We've been there a couple of times, and it's impressive every time you see it.

Not quite six years ago, Nancy and I did one of those "bucket-list" trips. We went to Alaska for our 30th wedding anniversary. If you have ever been there, you know just how big the mountains are in Alaska. We spent about a week on land and another week on the sea. One of the highlights on that trip was going to Denali. Many people don't even get to see the mountain, but we got to see it in all its glory. Not only did we see it from a distance, we decided to see it close up and personal. We decided to take a tour of it on a plane. As part of that tour, we landed on one of the glaciers on the mountain. It's really hard to imagine just how big it is until you're standing up on it. It was impressive to say the least.

Can you imagine standing in Isaiah's shoes this morning in our text? What would your reaction be? Would you stand there and go, "wow?" Or would you stand there and go, "Woe?" Isaiah's initial reaction was: **"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."** There he was standing in the throne room in heaven. There he saw God in all his glory. What did that room look like? **"I saw the Lord, high and exalted, seated on a throne; and the train of his robe filled the temple. 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."**

Imagine what Isaiah saw. The angels singing the song that we sung this morning: *Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty*, so loud that the doorposts and thresholds shook like there was a massive earthquake. You ever heard a car go by that you could hear their music across your whole yard? This was much louder than that. The doors of Solomon's temple were made of pine, overlaid with sheets of gold. It would take a lot to shake those doors. It was more than just the doors. The entire foundation shook. While all this is going on the temple was filled with smoke. Isaiah didn't just see and hear what was going on, but he could taste and smell it.

Standing before God, Isaiah saw himself as a sinner standing before the almighty God. There Isaiah stood knowing just how ugly his sins were. He knew that he was deserving of God's eternal punishment for his sin. There was no way to get around it. He was standing face to face with God and all he felt was sin. How could anyone see this and live? All Isaiah could see was just how much of a mess his life was in sin. What about each of here this morning. We are messed up people. Messed up people do messy things. We sin. But if you and I stood there in Isaiah's shoes and spent one moment in the presence of the Lord, our reaction would be the same: **"I am ruined!"**

Then God did something completely unexpected. **"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."** Just picture this sight – an angel of God coming toward you with a burning hot coal touching your lips with it. Talk about a terrifying sight from a horror movie. But then everything takes an unexpected turn as God so often does. Instead of burning the lips of Isaiah, the burning coal makes them clean. Remember Isaiah's words: **"I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips."** God was about to make his lips clean. The solution to unclean and sinful lips is found only in God. If sin is going to be removed from people's heart, it is God alone who will make us one with him again.

That coal is a picture of Jesus and what he did for Isaiah and us. Jesus would die in a way that would like pain. He was nailed to a cross and died a gruesome death. When you look at Jesus on the cross, it looks like nothing but pain and hurt. But that coal, did something incredible – it took away the sins of the world. For it is there that God says to each of us: **"See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for."**

God wants us to know that getting holy is not about we do, it's about what God did in Jesus. " Did you notice that what God said in those words? The sentence is past tense. It's complete. It's done. There was nothing left for Isaiah to do. His guilt had been removed. His sin had been atoned for. He would not be ruined. He would not die, but would live. God gave Isaiah a pardon before he even had the chance to ask for one. God says the same thing to each of us here today. The cross of Jesus changes everything.

When Isaiah realized that there was someone who was coming who would not just change him, but changes everyone who hears the message of Jesus. Look at how it changed Isaiah. He goes from being a man who stands there and says: **"Woe to me! I am ruined!"** to someone who now says: **"Here am I. Send me!"** Isaiah was ready to be used as a tool of God. He does the same for you and me. He lets us to be on his team.

When I was a young kid, my Grandfather lived in Green lake and his yard was the size of a couple of acres. When we would go up there, he would let me drive the riding lawn mower. It was awesome. He had a boat that we would use to go fishing, and there would be times that he would let me drive the boat. It was awesome. That's what God does for you and me. He lets us to be his tools. He lets you ride the riding lawn mower or drive the boat. Why? So, that we may all see something much greater than any part of his creation. For some day, we will all stand and marvel at the incredible God we have. May God grant it. Amen.