

Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty"

Isaiah 6:1-13 (key verse 3)

"And they were calling to one another: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty."

I cannot think of any other time for people to be reminded of who God truly is than the present moment we live in. In the of Isaiah we find a man whom God used greatly. It was not only in his generation but also in God's redemptive history. His ministry began with a vision of the Lord in the temple. This vision shaped his perspective and helped him set a life purpose centered on God's word. It is my prayer that the lord may plant His vision in our hearts so we may live fruitful lives of holiness and righteousness. Amen!

Look at verse 1, "In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord, high and exalted, seated on a throne; and the train of his robe filled the temple." It was in the period where king Uzziah died. In 2 Chronicles 26, we find a detailed account of the life of King Uzziah, who reigned in Jerusalem for 52 years. He followed the ways of the Lord, and as long as he sought the Lord, God granted him success. King Uzziah accomplished notable feats, including the destruction of the Philistines' strongholds with the assistance of the Lord. He established towns in Philistine territories, received tribute from the Ammonites, and gained fame even reaching the borders of Egypt due to his immense power. However, as his power grew, so did his pride, leading to unfaithfulness to the Lord his God. Uzziah sought to assume priestly functions beyond his royal role, ultimately crossing a sacred boundary. He transgressed against the LORD his God by entering the temple of the LORD to burn incense on the altar of incense. In response, God struck Uzziah with leprosy, and he was an isolated leper until his death. So to say in the year king Uzziah died is to say, in the year a great king and wise king died. Seeing and knowing all this, Isaiah had all the reasons to be discouraged and disillusioned at the death of King Uzziah, because a great king had passed away tragically. Where was the Lord in all this?

It was after those times, that Isaiah saw God's vision. He saw the lord, high and exalted, seated on a throne. God was still enthroned in heaven and was still in charge. The first observation that Isaiah perceives is God's transcendent nature, He beholds the Lord, high and exalted, seated on a throne, with His robe filling the temple. . The image of the Lord on the throne represents His sovereignty and authority over all creation, It embodies His ultimate rule and divine kingship, as well as His role as the Judge, ensuring justice and righteousness. Look at verse 2, "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." The glory of God was so magnificent that even the angels could not look, they covered their faces. They used four of their wings to honor God where the other two were for flying. Let us all read verse 3, to see what they were doing, verse 3, "And they were calling to one another: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory."

This intentional repetition of the word 'holy' three times elevates and emphasizes God's sacredness to the highest degree. What does it mean that the Lord is holy? This is something not easy for us to understand. In the old English, the word "holy" is closely related to the word "whole." This means that everything that should be there is there, and that what is there is the totality of a thing. In other words nothing is missing; it is perfect. So to say that God is holy, in this sense, is to say that God is whole, or perfect, in all of his attributes, and that this absolute perfection is the most defining characteristic of God. It means that God's love is perfect love, his justice is perfect justice, his goodness is perfect goodness, and so on. Another meaning of "holy" is set apart. This does not mean separated by space. It means separated by the quality of his being. The Lord is so superior to anything in his creation that he is beyond compare, "a cut above," "set apart." It vividly portrays His set-apart nature, transcendent essence, moral purity, and

uprightness. Everything connected to Him is inherently holy, and all of creation is bound to obey Him. Therefore, when a created being encounters the holy God it becomes aware of the infinite gap between itself and God. Because God is holy, he cannot be fully understood in light of human experience, reason, or knowledge. Such an encounter could evoke profound despair within humanity, encapsulated by John Oswalt as he wrote "For the finite, the incomplete, the fallible to encounter the infinite, the eternal, the self-consistent, and the infallible, is to comprehend the futility and hopelessness of one's existence before God." To encounter the holy God is to experience something out of this world which totally transforms us.

Verse 3, shows another attribute of God, he is the Lord Almighty. He has the power to do anything. He is the Creator God who made the heavens and the earth by the word of his mouth. He is also the Redeemer God who delivered the helpless Israelites from slavery by exerting his mighty strength. He did not spoil them with his power, but trained them in the wilderness to become useful people. This Lord Almighty was seated on the throne. Later, Isaiah calls him the King (5). The Lord makes a contrast with Uzziah. Although Uzziah was a relatively good king, he was also a sinful man. Due to his corruption, he abused his power, and people suffered under his reign. However, the real King of Judah and all creation is the holy Lord Almighty. He never abuses his power. He never gets sick or grows tired or weary; he never gets old. His reign is always perfect and it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace. Ultimately, his reign brings about the kingdom where there are no tears, sorrows, pains or death. His reign brings about the everlasting kingdom marked by peace, joy and love.

Look at verse 3b. "...the whole earth is full of his glory." Even in a fallen world, the essential reality is that God is living and working in all of his creation for his good purpose. The whole earth is full of his glory. With human eyes, we see injustices, tragedies and sorrows of all kinds. But when we see through the lens of the Lord's sovereign rule, we find the Lord's glory. Just in the past week we experienced a number of our members having family members passing away. It is an extremely sorrowful thing to go through. However, my prayer is that we may all look towards God and have his vision in our hearts. Our God is Holy, Holy, Holy, he is the Lord Almighty may this vision of God change our perspective in this world so we may look forward to His coming. God is good and God is almighty and the whole earth is full of His glory.

Verses 5-13 reveal what was Isaiah's response to God's vision and how the Lord further equipped Isaiah as his servant. First, the Lord cleanses Isaiah's lips from verses 5-7. 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." Isaiah's profound encounter with the overwhelming holiness of God leaves him with an acute awareness of his own inadequacy and unworthiness. The core of God's holiness, characterized by absolute purity and perfection, stands in stark contrast to Isaiah's human imperfections and sinfulness. Isaiah's exclamation of "Woe is me! I am ruined!" signifies his deep sense of despair and recognition of his sinful state in the presence of the holy God. He acknowledges the corruption of his words and thoughts, as what he speaks reflects the sinfulness within his heart. By using the phrase "unclean lips," Isaiah underscores his realization that his own words and actions are tainted with sin, making him unworthy before God. That when he had spoken words of doubt, unbelief and despair, he had dirtied himself and polluted the world around him. God will call us to account for every word that comes out of our mouths. Critical words that hurt others and words that express sinful desires are abhorrent to the Lord. This became unbearably clear to Isaiah as he listened to the seraphs sing the praise and glory of God. Isaiah expected God's judgment to fall upon him at any moment.

However, the Lord had mercy on helpless and miserable Isaiah. One of the seraphs flew to him with a live coal in his hand. The symbolism of the live coal taken from the altar is profoundly significant. The altar, associated with sacrifice and offerings in the ancient Hebrew culture, represents the place of atonement and consecration. The act of taking the live coal with tongs from the altar underscores the idea that the sacrifice has just occurred, signifying its freshness and efficacy in atoning for sins. The live coal, which has consumed the sacrifice, is then used to purify and atone for Isaiah's sin. This act represents a divine intervention, where God Himself provides the means for cleansing and forgiveness. Peace and joy flooded his soul. Isaiah became light and free, like a bird flying in the sky. His relationship with God was restored and he found life and strength in God. He could stand before the holy God as his servant. What good news this is! When we come to God as we are, confessing our sins and shortcomings, the Lord does not condemn us. The Lord is willing to forgive and cleanse us through the precious blood of Jesus Christ. The Lord enables us to stand before him and serve him in holiness and righteousness all our days (Luke 1:74,75). Some of us may have a burden of guilt in our hearts because of sins we committed. Let's come to Jesus right now by faith. He will forgive us and heal us by his grace.

Secondly, the Lord commissioned Isaiah based on verses 8-13, when Isaiah's sins were cleansed and his soul was healed, he began to hear the Lord speaking. The Lord was saying, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us." The Lord wanted to send someone to his people to share his message with them. The Lord had a broken heart for his people. He wanted to forgive, restore, and bless them (Isa 1:18-19). He was not only the holy and almighty God, but he was also a God of love and compassion and redemption. We must remember that though God is holy, his heart is broken for the lost world. How did Isaiah respond? Isaiah had just experienced the marvelous grace of God. His heart was moved by God's love for him and his people. So he committed himself to serve the lord, "Here am I. Send me!" The Lord accepted his offer. The Lord commissioned Isaiah as a messenger to his people. What was the message? Look at verses 9-10. "Go and tell this people: "Be ever hearing, but never understanding; be ever seeing, but never perceiving." Make the heart of this people calloused; make their ears dull and close their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed." It seems that the result of Isaiah's message would be to make his people's hearts harder and harder. Almost without exception, God's servants want to see people accept the word of God, become God's children, and live holy and blessed lives. Seeing this gives one great joy and a sense of purpose. But Isaiah's ministry would make people's hearts harder. He would not see positive change as a result of his message but the hardening of people's hearts. At first glance, it seems that not carrying out this mission would be better for everybody.

So Isaiah asked, "For how long, O Lord?" The Lord told him to continue as long as there were people in the land, that is, until the nation had been judged completely for their sins. It means until there was no one left to hear the message. The Lord also told Isaiah that a holy seed would remain in the land. This refers to the line of godly people through whom the Messiah would come. In the end, the Lord would send Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who would defeat the power of sin and death completely through his suffering, death and resurrection. Jesus restores God's righteous reign and the kingdom of God. While on earth, Jesus told his disciples the parable of the sower. As he did so, he quoted from this passage in Isaiah. Jesus wanted his disciples to understand the characteristic of gospel work. Though the gospel is the message of salvation, the good news of great joy for all people, many who hear do not accept it. In fact, their hearts become harder as they reject the message of Christ. But the Lord never gives up. He sends his servants to preach the gospel as long as there are people who will hear the message. The success of a gospel worker cannot be measured in

terms of visible fruit of ministry. The success of a gospel worker is measured in terms of his faithfulness to the message he or she was sent to preach. May God raise us as his gospel workers who will not compromise his message but filled with God's vision in our hearts will declare his message in Love. We cannot do this by our own strength but need by having our hearts filled with the vision of God. This is how we can live holy and Godly lives.

I spent the past years of my university life with a distorted view of who God truly is. I knew a lot about God, but His holiness wasn't my foremost perception. I diligently studied scriptures and attended Bible studies, hoping it would make me righteous in God's sight. However, I failed to prioritize genuine change or strive to conform to the image of Jesus Christ. I continued living in emptiness, committing blasphemous acts and uttering words too disgraceful to recount. My life was a dichotomy—I had a facade of godliness while denying its true power. I disrespected my bursaries coordinators and missed important assignment deadlines due to my sinful activities. My disobedience extended the duration of my studies and caused me to lose bursaries. As I reflect on my life, I see nothing good in me. I lived in habitual sin, a living offense as in one who sins with every breath they take deserving nothing but death. My encounter with the holiness of God left me utterly consumed, realizing the sanctity of the body and breath God had given me. I prostrated myself before idols, engaging in immorality. I praised the Lord with my lips, yet uttered blasphemies against Him—the epitome of hypocrisy. In the presence of God's pure holiness, I knew there was no hope for me.

One night, in desperation, I prayed, 'Lord, may I die a terrible death. At my resting place, may there be no tombstone—only thorns and thistles.' I believed I didn't deserve to breathe. Then, for the first time in many years of church attendance, Bible studies, and testimony writing, Jesus Christ became real to me. He urged me in the way of repentance, reminding me of the Scripture that says the Lord does not delight in the death of the wicked, but desires that people should turn and live. I turned and repented of my sin. 'Formerly, I thought sin was a pleasant thing, but now God's vision has helped me see differently. Formerly, I thought the world was an attractive place, but now I know better. Formerly, I regarded it as a miserable business to be a Christian, but now I think differently.' Once, I found certain things delightful; now, I find them vile. Once, I considered other things utterly worthless; now, I deem them most precious. Today, I stand before you as an object of mercy, proclaiming the Holiness of God. Not because I have achieved anything, but because God ordained a sacrifice for my sins. Through the blood of Jesus, I repent of my sin and Jesus is my coal of fire that has cleansed me. It is Jesus who gives me a sense of peace. That I too can serve in his redemptive work. Today he has allowed me to deliver this message to you all. This is possible all because of the love and grace of God over my life. I thank God for his holiness, he is the Lord almighty. The Lord's vision gives me hope, to struggle to live for him for the rest of my life.

In conclusion, the terrible death of a great and wise king. Who was once faithful to God but died in sin and shame. Left a society of sinners and hopelessness. Isaiah was also doubtful wondering where was God in all this. However, the Lord showed Isaiah where he was, he was seated on His throne, still in control. God is Holy, Holy, Holy the Lord is Almighty nothing can compare to him or comes close to him. God's vision to Isaiah was not to simply be enjoyed, but it revealed Isaiah's sin. He could then repent and be cleansed. Not only that, God gave him a life direction to be a messenger of His word. An honorable duty indeed. It I my prayer that we may have God's vision of His holiness in our hearts to that we may be freed from the burden of sin and be used greatly for God's redemptive work. Amen!