

Isaiah 6.1-8 "I've seen the Lord, I've seen myself, now what?"

Last Sunday we were struck by the enormous task given by Jesus to his church. Jesus tells his church to be his witnesses to a world that needs to hear of him. Jesus calls his church to go and testify. But if we are honest, we must confess that it is not easy and that we are slow to obey Jesus. We want to obey Jesus. The mind is willing but the flesh is weak. The early church too was slow to obey the call of Jesus. The first Christians were slow to leave Jerusalem to go to the ends of the earth. We are convinced of the need. It's indisputable. But we are slow to obey. So this morning, I want to put before us a model, an example of someone who heard the call and who did not delay, who responded immediately. I put before us the prophet Isaiah by asking the question: What made it possible for Isaiah to respond to God's call in his life? Is there anything in his story that can help us respond to God's call in our lives? What enabled Isaiah to say: here I am, send me? That's what we want to say, isn't it? Jesus calls us. We want to reply: "send me". How is it possible?

In the northern kingdom, King Jeroboam had died shortly before, and further north, the great empire of Assyria is growing and will soon come to attack Israel and Judah. Uzziah became king at the age of 16 and reigned for half a century. Judah prospered well during his reign. 2 Chronicles " He sought God during the days of Zechariah, who instructed him in the fear of God. As long as he sought the LORD, God gave him success. "

During the reign of Uzziah, the land of Judah was safe. But now he's dead. He is no longer on the throne. With threats all around, what will happen to the nation of Judah? It is in this context of change and uncertainty that this vision comes to the prophet Isaiah. The people of Judah are afraid. They feel threatened. And it is in this context that God grants this vision to Isaiah. What does Isaiah see of God?

The sovereign majesty of God.

Verse 1 - " I saw the Lord, seated on a throne, high and exalted. He sees Adonai, the great sovereign, the judge of heaven and earth. At a time of great concern, in the year of the death of the mighty king Uzziah, at a time when the people were keenly aware of the king's absence, Isaiah said, "I saw the Lord on the throne." I saw the one who is truly on the highest throne. I have seen him who rules not only over Judah but over all nations. I saw the one who will never die.

What comfort for Isaiah and for the people of God. It doesn't matter who is on the earthly throne, what matters is that Almighty God is seated on the heavenly throne. And he who is on the throne is none other than Jesus himself. The one on the sovereign throne, the judgment throne, is Jesus. The apostle John tells us: John 12:41 - "Isaiah said these things when he saw the glory of Jesus and spoke about him." Here is Jesus in all his sovereign majesty.

And we see the extent of Jesus's sovereignty in verse 1 - "the train of his robe filled the temple." The train of his robe which represent his sovereign power and his reign extend over the entire length and width of the place where he is. Isaiah sees that there is no corner of the universe where Jesus does not reign.

And this throne is very high. There is no throne above the throne of Jesus. No king, no power is comparable to him. There is no other king to threaten him, no other sovereign to contradict him. He's the one who has the last word. Isaiah sees the sovereign majesty of Jesus Christ.

The holiness of God.

Verse 2: "Seraphim stood above him; they each had six wings; two with which they covered their faces, two with which they covered their feet, and two which they used to fly. They called out to one another and said, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts! 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. "

Who are these seraphim? This Hebrew word means "burning ones", they stand above the Lord. They are where servants stand waiting for their master's orders. It is a position of respect and service. And what were these hot beings doing? Look at verse 2: "They each had six wings; two with which they covered their faces, two with which they covered their feet, and two which they used to fly. "

They cover their faces because they cannot look at the holiness of God. They cover their feet, perhaps out of modesty in the presence of the Almighty or perhaps because they do not want to touch the ground so as not to be defiled in a world full of sin. It's hard to be sure.

Then, with two wings, they fly. They fly here and there to carry out God's commandments. They are ready to cross the earth to accomplish the will of God.

But what interests us most is what these seraphim say - verse 3 "And they cried to one another:" Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory." " Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of Hosts". What reality captures celestial beings? What aspect of the person of Jesus? What strikes them above all? It's his holiness, the holiness of Jesus Christ. This triple repetition in Hebrew serves to underline the completeness of the holiness of God. It is the only time in the Old Testament that a word is repeated 3 times this way. "Holy, holy, holy." It is not possible to imagine something or someone holier. There is no level of holiness that is even close to that which is before the seraphim.

But what is this holiness? When we say that God is holy, holy, holy, what does that mean?

When we talk about the holiness of God, we talk about how He is separate from sin, from evil, and how He is devoted to what is good and just. We talk about his moral perfection. He cannot bear evil, sin in any way. In all things, he always does what is right and just. He is perfect in everything he does, entirely separate from evil.

There are many other attributes of God that the seraphim could speak of. God is love, God is faithful, God is just, but the attribute of God who grasps these heavenly beings is his holiness.

And this holiness of Jesus on his throne is something that cannot be hidden. The seraphim shout - "the whole earth is full of his glory". The glory of his holiness is seen everywhere. What an incredible vision. What majesty, what glory. In the song

of Moses in Exodus 15 we read: Who is like you among the gods, O Lord? Who is like you magnificent in holiness, Worthy of praise, performing wonders?

Is this our vision of God? You could say that the circumstances of our life are like those of Isaiah. The foundations of our world are shaken. There are threats and insecurity all around. Like Isaiah, we need to see Jesus on his throne. We need to know that Jesus reigns, that Jesus is sovereign. We need a vision of the holiness of God. We need a great God. A mighty, just, glorious God in everything he does. We need a vision of God that helps us understand that it is not a virus that is sovereign in this world. It's not our leaders who are sovereign. It is above all not us who are sovereign. We are not the ones on the throne. It's God.

Isaiah saw the Lord, seated on the throne, very high, the seraphim who cry out holy, holy, holy. The whole earth is full of his glory.

What does Isaiah see of himself?

When I was younger, I played tennis a lot. I lived next to a tennis club and spent summer after summer playing there. And compared to my friends, I had rather strong and fast service. I was proud of my racket service until 1995 when I had the opportunity to watch train the player with the fastest service in the world. And it was by watching him play that I could see things about myself. When I saw the strength of his service, I saw at the same time, the weakness of mine. I was looking at someone else but by doing this I was seeing things about myself.

And that's what's going on with Isaiah. He's looking at someone else. He looks at Jesus, but he sees things about himself. He sees the holiness and the glory of Jesus. What does he see for himself? V5 - "Woe is me! I'm lost! For I am a man whose lips are unclean, and I live among a people whose lips are unclean, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." This word "lost" could be translated - silenced. Isaiah is in the presence of the Seraphim who worship God but he cannot even open his mouth to praise and worship. Through his vision of the holiness of Jesus, he sees his own sin as he has never seen it, and he does not even feel worthy to open his mouth in the presence of God.

Struck by the vision of the 3 times holy God, Isaiah sees his own impurity and the impurity of the people among whom he lives. Here is a man broken by his own sin and the sin of his people. He is like Peter who sees the majesty of Christ in the miraculous catch of fish. He throws himself at the feet of Jesus, crying out, "Depart from me because I am a sinful man." Job has a similar experience of seeing God - Job 42.5-6 "My ear had heard of you; But now my eye has seen you. That's why I condemn myself and I repent in dust and ashes." Here before us is a picture of what happens when we start to see Jesus in all his glory and in all his holiness. When we see Jesus Christ in His glory, we begin to see the true state of our own heart. When we have a right vision of Jesus, we begin to see ourselves as we really are. With Isaiah, Job and Peter we realize that we are lost, that we are ruined, that we are not worthy to look up to God.

So to understand who we really are, we need a correct vision of the person of Jesus Christ. It is easy to look at our loved ones, our neighbors, our colleagues and base our identity, our ideas on ourselves on what we see in them. But to really find out who I am, I must first find out who Jesus is. I have to look at Jesus. I have to study Jesus. I have to look at his perfection and total holiness and see him as he is and then I can see myself in the light of the person of Jesus.

This is where Christian life begins, with a right vision of God and a right vision of ourselves. And God grants that vision to Isaiah.

How does Isaiah respond to this vision?

To answer this question, we must understand why God grants this vision to Isaiah. Is it to ruin Isaiah? Does he want to leave him in a state of despair? No, we see God's purpose in verses 6 to 9.

Purification - In verse 5 we see a man broken by his sin. In verses 6 and 7 we see God's mercy and grace toward him. God sees the remorse and repentance of Isaiah and sends one of the seraphim with a burning coal to touch the lips of the prophet. This coal is taken from the altar, from the place of cleansing from sin, the place of bloodshed. The seraph comes to touch Isaiah's lips. Isaiah is especially aware of the sin of his lips so it is his lips that are touched by the coal to purify them.

Comfort. Look at what is said in v7 - "This has touched your lips; your guilt is removed and your sin is atoned for." No more guilt, no more burden. God removes the guilt and reassures his servant.

To say to a man broken by guilt "your guilt is removed", what is more comforting? Can you think of a better way to encourage someone burdened with the burden of their sin?

Call - Verse 8 says, "I heard the voice of the Lord saying, Whom shall I send? And who will go for us? And I say, "Here I am. Send me!"

God gives this vision to Isaiah. God allows Isaiah to see the glory, the holiness of God. He purifies him, he comforts him, he forgives him. It allows Isaiah to experience the mercy of the God who takes away guilt, who forgives, who takes away sin. He allows Isaiah to understand the character of God and immediately afterward, God calls him to dedicate himself to the service of God. God reveals himself to Isaiah. He forgives him, purifies him and then he asks the question: Who will I send? Who will work for us? After seeing the glory of God and having received forgiveness for his sin, Isaiah has only one answer to God's questions. Isaiah's response to God's call is a response of gratitude and worship. His heart is so captivated by the holiness of God, so filled with God's grace and forgiveness, that his response to verse 8 is so natural: "Here I am, send me."

God gives a vision to his servant. He purifies him. He comforts him then he calls him. And Isaiah, with a heart of worship and gratitude, answers: Send me.

And what God does for Isaiah, he does for every Christian. He gives a vision of his glory, his holiness, his sovereign power. Read this book to see the glory of Jesus. Look at Jesus on the cross. Look at the risen Jesus. Look at Jesus ascended to

heaven and seated at the right hand of his Father. Look at how the Bible describes his future return. What do you see? Glory, majesty, holiness, sovereign reign. In his grace, God also reveals to us the true state of our heart, our need for forgiveness and grace. And by the work of his Holy Spirit, God draws us to him irresistibly. And when we come to this three times holy God, in faith and repentance, God reassures us with promises of forgiveness, of cleansing from our sin. He says to us: My child "your guilt is removed and your sin atoned for"
But after having purified and comforted us, God also calls us. God seeks a people zealous for service. As we saw last Sunday, he is looking for witnesses. He is looking for a people to send to the world. "Who will I send?" Who will go for us? God asks this question in front of each of his children. And God is looking for an answer of gratitude, an answer of love and obedience. He is looking for servants who say, Here I am, send me.

And when God sends us into the world as His witnesses, He does not set goals for us as to how many people we need to reach. He does not put the responsibility on us to save anyone. It simply tells us to bear witness to the glory and holiness of Jesus, to bear witness to the forgiveness and comfort that we have received. Is there a greater privilege in this life, to witness to the glory, holiness, forgiveness, comfort of the Lord Jesus Christ? Isaiah sees the Lord. He sees his own sin. He experiences his grace. He hears his call. He says "here I am." Send me !"
Let us spend time contemplating the Lord, seated on a very high throne. Let us tremble at his holiness. Meditate on the grace that has been given to us and when we hear the question, "Who will I send?" we will know how to respond.