

Trinity Sunday, 2009
Good Hope Lutheran Church
Isaiah 6

From the book of the prophet Isaiah, chapter 6. Isaiah was speaking and Isaiah said, In the year the King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord, sitting on His throne, surrounded by the angels of heaven. And the angels all called to one another, “Holy Holy Holy is the Lord God of hosts! The whole earth is full of His glory!” And I said, “Woe is me, for I am a sinner, and yet with my own eyes I have seen the Lord.

The Lord be with you. And let us pray:

Lord open our eyes that we might see you, open our hearts that we might believe. Forgive us our many sins for Jesus’ sake, then reshape and refashion our lives, making of us the people you’ve always wanted us to be. Use us Lord, in this world of time, and then on the last day in your mercy, grant us a place in your heavenly Kingdom; in Jesus’ name we pray, AMEN.

The book of Isaiah begins quite naturally, with chapter 1. It then proceeds right on schedule through chapters 2, 3, 4, and 5—which is fine. No problem. But it’s like this book starts all over again, in chapter 6. You see, Isaiah had been a man of faith all along. Like most of us, he’d been a believer his entire life, but now in chapter 6 he has this, “born again” experience. Isaiah gets taken into the presence of God Himself, he sees the angels he’s touched by this burning coal. And he’s born again. And after this vision of heaven, Isaiah looks at things on earth a little different. He preaches, a little different. Chapter 6 not only seems to start this book over again—it starts Isaiah’s life, over again.

It’s a very dramatic moment in the Bible. And before I take this chapter and reduce to your typical three point Lutheran sermon, let me pause for a moment to say this: The key here today is not my three points. The key is not what I have to say or how well I say it. The key is you, like Isaiah, being pulled into the presence of God. The key, in the name of Jesus Christ, is you and your life being made new. Now if there was a sermon I could preach to get that done, I would, honest—but the solution is not my preaching. The solution is not my cooking. It’s your hunger. Like Isaiah chapters 1 through 5, so much of what passes for a life of faith today is kind of a routine going through the motions—stand up, sit down, sing a song, pass the plate—so much of what passes for faith is just going through the motions at church. Do we want more than that? Is

there more to life in Christ than pious rituals? I believe there is, and I promise to cook up the best sermons I can but again this is not about my cooking. It's about your hunger. Seek the Lord while He may be found, and pray that He draw you to Himself and change your life, the way He changed Isaiah's, here in chapter 6.

Now, to my three points. I bet you can't wait.

#1. In chapter 5. In chapter 5, Isaiah is on a roll. Isaiah is preaching up a storm, he's preaching about all those sinners out there. Woe to you, he says, repeatedly. Woe to you, heroes of the wine bottle! You party while others starve. Woe to you in your fine houses, you live in style while others have nothing! Woe to you, stuck in the rut of sin—the anger of God is kindled against you. Woe to you all.

It's powerful preaching in chapter 5, and he's right. There's a lot of sin out there, always has been, that's obvious, and we certainly can still see it today. The world is a sinful place! But in chapter 6, Isaiah changes his tune. Isaiah sees God, and realizes as if for the first time sin is not just them out there. It's me, here. I am a sinner, far short of the glory of God. Woe is me, Isaiah now says. Woe is me.

In church it is easy, and sometimes almost fun, to look at the world around us and say “Tsk tsk tsk. What evil sinful people.” Ok. But. You're not going to make much progress in faith until you stop comparing yourself to them, and start comparing yourself to God, when you do. Like Isaiah, you'll find there's plenty right here to work on, and it's time to start. There are times and seasons when we as Christians need to speak honestly about the sin out there, but it is always time to be honest about the sin here, and here. It is always time to see your life the way God sees it, to be cleansed by His fire, to be made new. That's #1.

#2. All this happened, it says, the year King Uzziah died. Who? King Uzziah, he had been king don't you know, for over 50 years. 50 years—fun to know Bible fact, and during those 50 years Uzziah was king, times were good. The stock market was up. SAT scores were all above average. But now he's dead. Uzziah is dead, and the good old days are officially over. And if you read

between the lines here, you can almost smell the fear. You can sense the anxiety Isaiah is feeling, what does the future hold now that good old King Uzziah, is gone.

Now nobody ever wants fear and anxiety in life, but can you see how God took this terrible moment, and used it to help Isaiah? Huh? My hunch is. God had wanted a closer relationship with Isaiah for years. For years, God had wanted to grant Isaiah a vision and convict his heart and change his life, for years God had wanted to do this. But Isaiah was “busy.” He had “things to do.” But introduce a little fear and anxiety, well I’ll be. Isaiah was suddenly more open to what God had to say.

So, do you maybe see how anxious moments in your life can be opportunities for God? Do you see how days that are comfy cozy can maybe, get in the way of God? I’m not suggesting that suffering is good, or that pain is something we should wish for. I am saying, we have a God so great and so mighty, He can take our worst days and use them for good. He can use your happy days too, by the way. Time to let Him? Do you need to wait for a crisis in your life to turn to the Lord? Or is today the day.

Finally, #3. The year King Uzziah died, Isaiah saw God on His throne. The king is dead, but the King of kings is alive and well thank you very much. The throne in Jerusalem is vacant, but the throne in heaven is and forever will be occupied. Pardon me, that seat is taken! Uzziah is dead, but God lives. Everything is changing, nothing has. Things on earth are in an upheaval, matters in heaven are pretty stable, so we can live in hope. We can live with a confident faith. We can live and love knowing that we belong to God through Christ, who died and rose again. We belong to God through Christ; and we know we always will. Let it be so for all of us in Jesus’ name, AMEN.