

## WOULD I DO? - Isaiah 6:1-8

**Isaiah 6:1** In the year of King Uzziah's death I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple.

<sup>2</sup> Seraphim stood above Him, each having six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew.

<sup>3</sup> And one called out to another and said, "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of hosts, The whole earth is full of His glory."

<sup>4</sup> And the foundations of the thresholds trembled at the voice of him who called out, while the temple was filling with smoke.

<sup>5</sup> Then I said, "Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I live among a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts."

<sup>6</sup> Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a burning coal in his hand, which he had taken from the altar with tongs.

<sup>7</sup> He touched my mouth *with it* and said, "Behold, this has touched your lips; and your iniquity is taken away and your sin is forgiven."

<sup>8</sup> Then I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?" Then I said, "Here am I. Send me!" (NASBU)

I Today we have a real treat by having a text from Isaiah which some consider the fifth Gospel.

A This passage from chapter 6 is generally regarded as Isaiah's call from God to become a prophet.

B The time is 740 years before the birth of Jesus Christ.

C King Uzziah – an earthly king – had died, but Isaiah declared: my eyes saw the King – the eternal King!

II Isaiah's encounter with God obviously is in connection with the Temple in Jerusalem, but how did he see Him?

A Isaiah was perhaps with the worshipping community outside the Temple on the Day of Atonement – the one day when the High Priest would draw aside the thick curtain (called the veil) that separated the Most Holy Place from the Holy Place.

B Perhaps as the veil was drawn aside God revealed His real Presence above the mercy seat of the Ark of the Covenant to Isaiah.

C The mercy seat - the lid of the Ark of the Covenant –was hidden behind the veil in darkness and was the throne of God on earth.

III Isaiah saw only the hem or train of His vestment which appeared to fill the entire Temple.

- A God – then as now – is much closer to us than we think.
  - B I am reminded of Moses’ experience at the burning bush that became sacred space as Moses discovered he was standing on holy ground.
  - C And, like Mary Magdalene in the Easter garden, Isaiah exclaimed: I saw the Lord!
  - D He was high, lofty, exalted, majestic, lifted up
- IV Above Him were the Seraphim – a special rank of angels.  
Wherever God is, there are the Seraphim.  
Wherever the Seraphim are, there is God!
- A We greet the Seraphim again in Chapters 4 & 5 of Revelation as our Lord Christ ascended into Heaven.
  - C The Seraphim were chanting – the English translation indicates they called to one another – but the Hebrew verb indicates they chanted antiphonally to one another: Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory. Hebrew rarely has three repetitions. This is a super superlative.
  - D So powerfully monumental were their voices that the foundation and thresholds trembled as though an earthquake had occurred as the Temple filled with the smoke of the incense.
  - E God was manifesting Himself yet concealing Himself in the smoke lest His glory be too overwhelming for Isaiah.
  - F Just as Mount Sinai quaked as glorious smoke emanated from the pinnacle as the Word of God was given to Moses, so the Temple vibrated with the glory of God.
  - G God’s holiness is His glory concealed.  
His glory is His holiness revealed.  
Remember how John wrote of Jesus: We have beheld His glory – the glory of the only begotten Son of God – full of grace and truth.
  - H John 12: These things Isaiah said because he saw Jesus’ glory, and he spoke of Him.
- V The Seraphim each had six wings; with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet (euphemism for genitals) and with two he flew.
- A They must cover themselves in the Presence of God because His glory is too majestic for them to behold.
  - B This is the reason I bow over the Altar as we sing the *Sanctus* – Holy, Holy, Holy! Because, Jesus is becoming really present on the Altar at the time of the Eucharist, and we bow and genuflect as a sign of respect for His Presence.

- VI Then, as the Temple quivered, Isaiah said: Woe is me, for I am ruined!
- A I am undone; devastated; the word means that one is dead. I am as good as dead because I perceive the deadness of my soul.
- B Isaiah is repenting – dying to himself.
- C When Jesus said “woe” to the scribes and Pharisees, He was saying that they were spiritually dead.
- D Woe is a funeral lament.
- VII But why is Isaiah convicted of sin?
- A He said: Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; yet my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts. How can I praise Him with a foul mouth?
- B This encounter with the Living God in all His glory convicted Isaiah of his un-holiness – his sin.
- C This is God’s *opus alienum* – His alien work.
- D The Law precedes the Gospel to convince us of our sin and drives us to the Gospel of Jesus Christ for forgiveness.
- E The Cross precedes Resurrection.
- F We must be Baptized – born again from above by water and the Spirit – before we can begin to live the abundant life in Christ.
- VIII Now we arrive at the depth of God’s grace as a Seraph touched Isaiah’s mouth with a burning coal from the Altar of Incense that stood before the veil in the Temple.
- A The Seraph said to him: Behold, this has touched your lips; and your iniquity is taken away, and your sin is forgiven.
- B Iniquity is a comprehensive word that envelops not only one’s sin, but also the guilt and punishment for sin.
- C This is a fascinating and terrifying text, but it is the experience of the redeemed Christian.
- IX In New Testament terms, we would say that Isaiah has been justified – declared not guilty – by God.
- X Then, he heard God say: Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us? Not me, but us?
- XI And Isaiah – emboldened by his unsought, unmerited cleansing, said: Here am I. Send me!
- XII Literally, I believe he said: Would I do? Send me?
- XIII One of the Lutheran Bishops wrote a blog lamenting this feast day as the only day devoted to a doctrine.
- A But it is ever so much more.

- B Isaiah's story is the Christian experience of encountering Christ, dying to oneself, and receiving forgiveness.
- C Then there arrives the blessed thought that just perhaps I can do something for the Kingdom.
- D Perhaps I can place my name on the Chart ... or more