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St. Paul's Lutheran Church
2100 16th Street SW
Austin, MN 55912-1749
Pastor Ted Barthels
Sermon preached on
February 13, 2022
6th Sunday after Epiphany

Scripture Lessons: 1 Corinthians 14:12-20, Luke 5:1-11

Hymns: 246; 377:1,2,6,9; 395:1-4; 377:10

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: Isaiah 6:1-8

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His *robe* filled the temple. ² Above it stood seraphim; each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. ³ And one cried to another and said:

“Holy, holy, holy *is* the LORD of hosts;
The whole earth *is* full of His glory!”

⁴ And the posts of the door were shaken by the voice of him who cried out, and the house was filled with smoke.

⁵ So I said: “Woe *is* me, for I am undone!

Because I *am* a man of unclean lips,
And I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips;
For my eyes have seen the King, The LORD of hosts.”

⁶ Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a live coal *which* he had taken with the tongs from the altar. ⁷ And he touched my mouth *with it*, and said:

“Behold, this has touched your lips;
Your iniquity is taken away, And your sin purged.”

⁸ Also 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.” (NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth.
Amen.

In Christ Jesus, God our Savior, dear fellow Redeemed:

INTRO: (Serving the Lord with gladness.)

Psalm 100 begins with these familiar words:

“Make a joyful shout to the LORD, all you lands!

² Serve the Lord with gladness;

Come before His presence with singing.

³ Know that the LORD, He is God;

It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves;

We are His people and the sheep of His pasture. (Psalm 100:1-3)

These are words that not only characterize how we should worship, but also how we should live. We note that the psalmist is telling the **world** to come before the Lord with a joyful shout and **all the world** should be ready and willing to serve the Lord with gladness! Many Christians love this verse of the Bible and may quote it frequently. It is an encouragement for us in our attitude towards worship and living a Christian life. What we sometimes forget is that this isn't the way most people view things. Most people in this world don't acknowledge the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ to be the one true God, the one and **only** God whom we should praise and serve in our lives.

Indeed, many Christians perhaps we should say all Christians, struggle with this verse of the Bible. Our flesh may not find great joy and eagerness at the prospect of getting out of bed on a Sunday morning, especially on a cold winter's day like this morning, and eagerly come to church to sing the Lord's praises. Many of us Christians struggle even more with the “*servicing the Lord with gladness*” part of this verse. Some service that we might choose in one or another circumstance may be with gladness, but other service to the Lord may be taken on with something less than gladness.

Why is this? It comes down to our perception of the glory of the Lord. Indeed, the Lord is glorious, and we are spending several Sundays in this Epiphany season of the church year focused on that

glory of the Lord, including especially the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. Couple more weeks and we will observe Transfiguration Sunday which really marks the revelation of Jesus' glory with a remarkable account of the brilliance of Jesus' **divine** glory! It may even call to mind the sight Isaiah beheld in our text this morning.

These are powerful pictures of the glory of the Lord, and they relate to service. Our text is a record of Isaiah's call to be God's prophet. It was a task that Isaiah undertook with gladness. How did that come about? What can we learn from this event for our instruction in righteousness? We are shown --

**THEME: The Glory of the Lord as The Source of the
Christian's Desire to Serve the Lord.**

However, it is quickly revealed that this desire is --

I. Not from the Glory of God's Holiness.

First, let's be clear that this was a vision that Isaiah was shown in that year that King Uzziah died. The Lord was not a physical being that would be sitting on a throne somewhere around or above the temple. This was a vision that was intended to make a powerful impression on Isaiah, and it is the Spirit's intention to make such an impression on our hearts and minds as well.

Isaiah "*saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple.*" ²*Above it stood seraphim; each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew.* ³*And one cried to another and said:*

*"Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts;
The whole earth is full of His glory!"*

⁴*And the posts of the door were shaken by the voice of him who cried out, and the house was filled with smoke.*" (Isaiah 6:1-4)

The words are well chosen by the Holy Spirit to impress all who read this account with the power of what Isaiah saw in this vision of the LORD of hosts! The power and majesty and dominion of almighty God were clearly evident. The presence of the seraphim or special angels as attendants to almighty God dramatically increase the vision's power as the angels with their glorious

presence and their booming voices call out to one another the praise of God's holiness! "*HOLY, HOLY HOLY is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory!*" (v.3)

What a powerful expression of the glory of God's holiness and almighty power! In the vision the temple was filled with smoke and the doorposts were shaken!

Now, this is a true and accurate depiction of the glory of our God. I want us to understand, don't just think this depicts God's glory but think, this is a depiction of the glory of OUR God. It is not just a depiction of the glory of His power, that He is the LORD of armies, that all the angel hosts are at His command, and that He and He alone sustains the universe. What is more to the point is that this is the glory of God's **holiness**. Our God is holy, and the glory of His holiness is unbearable for us, any of us sinners to behold.

What's the point here? Remember we are focused this Sunday on how Christians serve the Lord with gladness. In our Scripture lessons we learned how Jesus called His disciples to follow Him, That call was accompanied with a both a sermon, and wondrous miracle. We also read how the Apostle Paul encourages the Church to use spiritual gifts to edify, that is buildup the Church. We are not to use our gifts merely for personal gain or glory, or even simply neglect them so the Church doesn't benefit from them.

Isaiah was being called into service as God's prophet in difficult times. Did such a demonstration of the glory of God's holiness bring a joyous response from Isaiah so that Isaiah was eager and happy to serve the Lord? Do we look to the wonder of the glory of God's holiness and power to find motivation for our service?

Well, let's read Isaiah's response again. "*So I said: 'Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, The LORD of hosts.'*" (v.5)

I don't know about you, but that doesn't sound like joy to me! It sounds more like despair to me! And that despair came from comprehending the true holiness of God. The Scriptural conclusion is a legal force. "*And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 'Speak to*

all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say to them: 'You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy.'"

(Leviticus 19:1-2)

Many turn to just such a picture to motivate joyous service to the Lord when they exhort people with a list of things to do for the Lord in order to be good Christians. It may be done with a lighthearted voice, but the power of the law strikes fear in the heart of sinners. Knowing the absolute holiness of our God and how we ..., well we are like Isaiah, we are like the rest of the world, "*For there is no difference; ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*" (Romans 3:22-23)

Our state of mind and heart in view of the glory of the Lord's holiness must be the same as Isaiah's, "*Woe is me for I am undone!*" (v.5) Isaiah goes right to the sins of his lips. He knows that he is defiled, that he is a man of unclean lips. He cannot rightly praise the Lord. We need not belabor the point that we must confess that we have sinned with our lips, that we have spoken evil against our neighbor, or blasphemed, or spoke an untruth in doctrine, or failed to praise the Lord as is our duty to thank, praise, serve, and obey Him. It is better that we understand what Isaiah was thinking. Isaiah knew his sin and he knew that it thoroughly corrupted him before the Lord, right down to and including his lips. Isaiah also confessed near the end of his prophetic writing. "*We are all like an unclean thing, And all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags.*" (Isaiah 64:6) That is us at our best. "*By the law is the knowledge of sin.*" (Romans 3:20) God's holy glory is the ultimate expression of the law, and by it we are crushed. We are undone.

At this point in the vision Isaiah was **not** jumping up and crying out, "*Here am I! Send me!*" (v.8) And we need to know what changed things for Isaiah that we also might possess that eager joy-filled desire to serve the Lord. The vision directs us to --

II. The Glory of the Cleansing Power of the Gospel.

The power and the intent of the law is to bring the sinner to his knees in utter despair of his own righteousness. And that is where the vision took Isaiah. But when Isaiah had despaired of his own

righteousness the Lord provided a righteousness that came to him from the altar of sacrifice.

“Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a live coal which he had taken with the tongs from the altar. ⁷ And he touched my mouth with it, and said: “Behold, this has touched your lips; Your iniquity is taken away, And your sin purged.”

(v.6-7)

There is a lot of grace dispensed in this part of the vision. And it is indeed very personal. The angel used a tongs to take a coal from the alter, the altar upon which sin offerings were made that represented the offering of the Lamb of God that was to come into the world. The vision presents the purifying power of the offering which the Lord God prepared and made for the sins of the world.

When the angel touched that live coal to Isaiah’s lips it was with the proclamation of gospel absolution: *“This has touched your lips your iniquity is taken away, and your sin purged.!”* (v.7) That power of the gospel had an immediate impact upon Isaiah. It changed his heart in a moment. Immediately Isaiah was lifted from the depths of despair over his sin to the joy of salvation. Immediately his fear and trembling before the Lord was dispelled.

That is the power of the gospel that is brought to us as well. Now you might think that we haven’t experienced anything like this vision which Isaiah not just saw but experienced, and I will answer you that indeed we have been given something from the Lord that is even better! Isaiah saw and experienced the blessings of that which was to come; we have been given the actual sacrifice for sin that the Lord has caused to touch your lips in the blessed Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper. Isaiah was given a vision; we have been given the real presence of Jesus’ body and blood given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. How this can be I can not tell you, but be assured that God’s Word declares this for you, and in the sacrament God’s called servant brings that sacrifice for sin to touch your lips, and *“Your iniquity is taken away, And your sin purged”* (v.7)

We are told in no uncertain terms Jesus takes your sins away, He *“bore OUR SINS in His own body on the tree,”* (1Peter 2:24) and just

as Isaiah prophesied , *“He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed.”* (Isaiah 53:5) We are assured by the Apostle John: *“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”* (1 John 1:9) So the situation that we were under that *“all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”* (Romans 3:23) has been thoroughly and eternally resolved, for there is no difference, we too have been *“justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, ²⁵ whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness.”* (Romans 3:24-25)

This is the wonder of the **glory of God** revealed in His gospel of love and forgiveness in Jesus Christ our Lord. It dispels our grief and sadness and lifts us up from sin’s despair that we might know the joy of our salvation in Christ Jesus.

That’s it! This Gospel is **the Glory of the Lord that is The Source of the Christian’s Desire to Serve the Lord**. That was the power that gave Isaiah a new spirit of hope and joy to serve the Lord as we are told in the conclusion of his vision:

“Also 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.” (v.8)

The path that lay before Isaiah wouldn’t always be easy. Some of the kings under whom Isaiah lived and served the Lord welcomed the Word of God Isaiah brought them. Others disdained the Word Isaiah brought them. Tradition says King Manasseh had Isaiah sawn in half. In spite of what lay before him Isaiah was eager to serve the God of his salvation with joy and gladness.

This gospel is the only source of a true Christian desire to serve the Lord. Any lagging in desire to come before the Lord and praise and serve the Lord with gladness indicates a need to hear the gospel more, and to meditate upon the wonder of grace that the Lord brings us with the cleansing power of Jesus’ blood. But with the gospel touching our hearts we too may know the joy that comes to all who believe. Then we too may call out in response to

the Lord's question, "*Whom shall I send and who will go for Us?*
HERE AM I! SEND ME!

AMEN.

And the peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.