

Nobody in this room would disagree: our world is hurting. Nobody in this room would disagree: God can help. But how? One time, God helped a hurting world by sending a prophet named Isaiah to be the voice of reason and the voice of comfort in a hurting world. How did he do it? Here's his story.

Isaiah 6:1-8

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. 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. ³ And they were calling to one another:

**"Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty;
the whole earth is full of his glory."**

⁴ At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke.

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."

⁶ Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. ⁷ With it he touched my mouth and said, "See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for."

⁸ Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?"

And I said, "Here am I. Send me!"

GOD IS HOLY

The world was hurting. God can help. How? By convincing Isaiah of three things.

God is holy. I'm a mess. God makes me clean. He taught Isaiah through the details. Isaiah sees God on a throne like a king, and he is way high up. That's intimidating. And his robe is so big it fills the room. And God has royal attendants, but they're not human. They're these powerful mythical creatures flying even higher than the throne, seraphim. And they're screaming at each other, "Holy! Holy! Holy! Is the Lord Almighty!" Can you picture Isaiah trying to take it all in? What is God teaching him? "I am up here." That's what "holy" means. "Holy" can mean that you don't do any sins, and God doesn't sin. But it also means "unique." God is the one and only source of life. God is the one and only king of the universe. God is so far above his creatures that your imagination can't even picture it. He's holy, and when Isaiah saw that, it freaked him out.

And that's part of what Trinity Sunday is for us. We can say the right words, that God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit; three persons in one God." But I don't get it. Neither do you. After the sermon we're going to recite the Athanasian Creed, which describes the Triune God. And if you're like me, there will be moments when your mouth is saying the words but your mind is wondering, "Wait,



what?" In that moment you've got a little taste of what Isaiah experienced when he saw the Lord. Isaiah saw with his eyes, we speak with our mouths, but none of us can understand God. Maybe, like Isaiah, that freaks you out. Good. It is good for us to know that God is way bigger than us, smarter than us. He's holy, so that we might him seriously.

I'M A MESS

God is holy, but Isaiah was not. As the seraphim were shouting about God's holiness the room began to shake and fill with smoke. And Isaiah had heard the stories. The stories about when Moses and the Israelites met with God at a mountain called Sinai. The mountain shook and filled with smoke. That was enough to scare the people but then God spoke. **"You shall have no other gods. You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God. Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy."** (Exodus 20) God gave the ten commandments. Do this! But the people had not done that. The earthquake the smoke, God; it vaporized their pride. They knew in that moment that they were messed up. They said to Moses, **"Do not have God speak to us, or we will die."** (Exodus 20:19) So God gave the rest of the rules to Moses. Things like: God's temple is holy. It's the source of life and it's clean. If you touch something that has to do with death, you're unclean. If you catch a disease, you're unclean. If you touch a dead body, you're unclean. It's not a sin to be unclean, but don't come into God's presence when you're unclean, or you'll die.

So when Isaiah saw the temple shaking and filled with smoke, he remembered God's laws. **"I am ruined!"** he said, **"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 6:5) Isaiah's pride vaporized. He knew he was a mess.

What about you? This world is hurting because people like you and I messed it up. When messed up people do messed up things, we make a mess. But you might not see that if you don't see the holiness of God. If you compare yourself to people who loot department stores, you might not look so bad, and you might not see the part of your heart that wants to take advantage of every situation for your own benefit. If I compare myself to neo-nazis, I look pretty good. And I might overlook the part of me that looks down on anyone who has a different opinion than mine. But if you or I spent one moment in the presence of the Lord, holiness would vaporize our pride. **"I am ruined."**

GOD MAKES ME CLEAN

And throughout the Bible this is how it goes. When an unclean thing touches a clean thing, the clean thing is ruined, polluted. Until this: **Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. With it he touched my mouth and said, "See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for."** For the first time a clean thing transfers holiness to an unclean thing. And it's not the last time! When Jesus showed up and he was proclaimed to be God's holiness in human form. He walked around touching unclean things. He touched a man with leprosy and Jesus didn't become unclean, the disease was cured. He touched dead bodies and Jesus didn't become unclean, the dead bodies came to life. Jesus walked around cleansing the world by making unclean people holy. Until he became unclean. You see Jesus wasn't just handing out holiness, he was also collecting our mess. Like a sponge he absorbed the guilt of Moses and those terrified Israelites, he took the sin of Isaiah, he took responsibility for all the messed up things in your life and mine and in the whole world, and he paid the price for it. He died from our mess. And that's why Isaiah lived, because in an act of pure generosity, God had taken away his sin. That's why someday you will see God and live, because Jesus has taken away your sin.

That is what Isaiah needed to know before he could help a hurting world. God could have given him lessons in public speaking, or cultural awareness, but he didn't. He taught Isaiah these three things: God is holy. You are a mess. God makes you clean. You are not your past. You are not your mess. You are what the Lord Almighty declares you to be, and God declares you to be clean, and Isaiah was in no position to argue with him!

You know he's done that for you too. Just today I assured you that as a called servant of Christ and by his authority I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. God is holy. You are a mess. But the Triune God has declared you forgiven, and you are in no position to argue with him!

Do you know what else he has declared you to be? **“You are the salt of the earth.”** (Matthew 5:13) **“You are the light of the world.”** (Matthew 5:14) God has called you to be the voice of reason and the voice of comfort in this hurting world. But instead of providing lessons on public speaking or cultural sensitivity, God is vaporizing your pride and filling you with the powerful forgiveness of Jesus.

HELP FOR A HURTING WORLD

Right now the world is hurting. Our nation is restless and our neighbors are afraid. The Lord God can help in ways that no leader, no protest and no Facebook post can do. He can change human hearts, one at a time, starting with me and you. How would your words and actions look different if you started every morning by vaporizing your pride? How would my relationships change if they were not based on how much I like someone but they were based on the unconditional love of Jesus?

You don't have to see the Lord on his throne to relive Isaiah's experience. What would happen if tomorrow morning each of us took five minutes to come to terms with our sin, to take responsibility for the mess we've made in our lives. We could start our day with "I'm sorry God." And then we could come to terms with this most glorious thing, that the Lord Jesus has made us clean, he's declared us innocent. That's what our world needs most of all.

And Isaiah was being called to publically professionally proclaim that truth. That's the privilege of prophets, and while every single person here can share the love of Jesus, I want to talk especially to the young people here. There are so many ways for you to spend your life in service to God, but what if you chose to spend your career helping this hurting world by telling them about a Father who loves them, a Savior who died for them, and a Holy Spirit who lives in their heart? Being a staff minister or a teacher or a pastor is an amazing privilege. But it's not really about how smart you are, or how well you can talk, or how well you make decisions. It's about living three truths that Isaiah learned: God is holy. I'm a mess. And God made me clean. Amen.