“Holy, Holy, Holy”
Isaiah 6:1-8
November 4, 2012

Intro: Isaiah 66:1-2

Last week we considered the necessity of upholding God’s name with reverence and awe. This morning we are going to continue in that vein as we prepare to participate in the Lord’s Supper.

The application of this message is timely. As we go out with the hope of the Gospel, it must be highlighted by the holiness of God’s people within.

We cannot, with integrity, hold out the hope of the gospel outwardly, until the holiness of God has taken hold of us inwardly.

And that will not happen until we grasp a glorious vision of God.

My aim this morning is to simply renew our awe of God and His Gospel through 6 realities of God:

1. The Glory God (vs. 1-2)

“In the year of King Uzziah’s death”

• Reigned 52 years.
• Good & godly king until the end --“did right in the eyes of the Lord” (2 Chron 26:3-4)
• Became proud and went into the temple and burned incense which only the priests were to do. When the priests opposed him, he became enraged with them and God struck him with leprosy. Why? Because he defied the holiness of God. (2 Chron 26)
• National crisis and grieving

We cannot, with integrity, hold out the hope of the gospel outwardly, until the holiness of God has taken hold of us inwardly.

2. The Holiness of God (vs. 3-4)

“I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple”

• Not an earthly throne, but a heavenly throne
• Kings wore long robes as a sign of their authority—it displayed the extent of their glory
• This robe is immeasurably long flowing from His heavenly throne to the earthly temple and filling it

“Seraphim” (vs. 2)

• 2 wings to fly ~ to carry out their ministry in His presence
• 2 wings to cover their face ~ to shield them from the immediate radiance of God’s glory.
  --Ex. 33 ~ No man can see my face and live
  --Heb 12:29 ~ Our God is a Consuming Fire
  *The Seraphim are not sinful beings and yet they shield themselves from the blinding radiance of His glory
• 2 wings to cover their feet
  --Ex 3: “Take off your scandals for the place where you are standing is holy ground.”
  --symbolize that we are of the earth—earthy. We are creatures in the presence of the Creator.
  *Seraphim are not of the earth, and yet in the presence of the Creator so they humbly cover their feet.

--The seraphim carry out the ministry of continual worship in the presence of God. They publicly declare praise of who God (YHWH) is: He is Holy, Holy, Holy.

--Hebrew literary device to elevate something to the highest degree of emphasis (triple repetition).

1 Background info taken from The Holiness of God (Sproul) and Interpreting Isaiah (Wolf)
--Illus: Gen. 14 ~ Asphalt pits that the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fell into when fleeing from the battle.

--No other attribute of God is intensified to the third degree in Scripture

“The whole earth is full of His glory”

--even Isaiah’s vision of the Lord could not fully express the pervasive glory of God. Not only does the glory of his garment flow from His heavenly throne down to fill the earthly temple, but also all of creation—all that has He has made—declares the glory of it’s Creator.

--“The heaven’s declare (give testimony to) the glory of God” (Ps 19:1)

“And the foundations of the thresholds trembled at the voice of Him who called out, while the temple was filling with smoke.”

--not uncommon for a manifestation of God’s presence to be accompanied by an earthquake; the earth trembles at His voice. Psalm 104:31-32: Let the glory of the LORD endure forever; Let the LORD be glad in His works; He looks at the earth, and it trembles; He touches the mountains, and they smoke.

--The smoke represents the glory of God’s presence.

-- 2 Chron 5:14 ~ priests could no longer stand to minister because of the cloud for the glory of the Lord filled the house.

Do you know this God who is Holy, Holy, Holy? Have your eyes been opened to see the Lord in whose presence sinful men tremble? To tremble is the appropriate response of sinful men in the presence of God who is Holy, Holy, Holy.

3. The Dread of God (vs. 5)

Having witnessed the glory of God and the Holiness of God, Isaiah has the audacity to speak!

Isaiah speaks but he does not speak carelessly. He says the only thing that could be said: Woe is me!

“Woe”

--The prophets often spoke in oracles which were direct announcements from God that could either come in the form of good news (Blessed…are the pure in heart—Matt. 5:8) or bad news (Woe…Isaiah 5:20-23). An oracle of “woe” is an announcement of doom.

--Isaiah pronounces the oracle of doom/dread upon himself because he is standing in the presence of the One who is a consuming fire! Isaiah has encountered the dread of YHWH, most Holy, Holy, Holy.

“I am ruined…”

--Isaiah is literally undone (unraveled; disintegrated), coming apart at the seams because he is a sinful man in the presence of a holy God.

“I am a man of unclean lips”

--Jesus: “the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart” In the presence of God’s holiness, Isaiah not only sees the wickedness of His own heart portrayed on his very lips which have failed to perfectly reverence God, but he is suddenly aware of the pervasive sinfulness of men all around him: “and I live among a people of unclean lips.”

What is it that Isaiah saw that brought such dread upon Him? “For my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.” (vs. 5)
Blackaby: “An exalted view of God brings a clear view of sin and a realistic view of self. A diminished view of God brings a reduced concern for sin and an inflated view of self.”

What we need more than going to church, counseling, vacation, encouragement, or correction is a glimpse of God. And when we see Him we see the reality of our sin and our need to be made holy by His grace. The way we live would never do should we see Him as He is.

4. The Mercy of God (vs. 6-7)

God does not leave Isaiah in the dreadful state of his sinfulness. He does not leave Isaiah undone.

--vs. 6 ~ the imagery here is powerful. On the day of atonement after the sacrifice had been made for all the sins of the people, the coals from the altar were carried inside the most holy place. They represented the purifying work of God’s grace. They represent the cost of God’s gift of repentance. Do you realize, according to the NT repentance is a gift from God? We can’t even repent apart from a gift of His grace! (2 Tim 2:25; Acts 5:31). When the seraphim says to Isaiah, “your sin is forgiven” this is not some shallow expression of ignoring or overlooking his sin. A sacrifice has been made. There has been a sacrificial death to acknowledge the dreadful holiness of God against sin.

This is what we call “severe mercy.” And never has there been more severe mercy than the cross of Jesus Christ where the Son of God—the Son if infinite worth—suffered at the hands of sinful men to bear the reproach of their wicked hearts and ours.

Once atonement had been made, it was then applied to Isaiah. As the coal touches his lips, it purifies him to be a messenger of the Holy One, to bear God’s name with holy reverence.

5. The Mission of God (vs. 8)

What would Isaiah’s message be? He would pronounce oracles of woe/judgment on sin. But he would also introduce us to the Christ of Isaiah 53 who would reverse the curse of sin by taking upon Himself our woe/sin/judgment/condemnation so that we might be forgiven.

Of Jesus, Isaiah would say, “Surely our griefs He Himself bore, And our sorrows He carried; Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, Smitten of God, and afflicted. 5 But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, And by His scourging we are healed. 6 All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way; But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all To fall on Him.” (Isaiah 53:4-6)

It is this message of the cross that leads finally to the joy of God.


While many would reject Isaiah’s gospel with hardened hearts, Isaiah would continue to preach for those who would hear because of the faithfulness of God, calling them to repentance.

Vs. 13 is a remarkable picture of transformation: “In stead of the thorn bush, the cypress will come up. Instead of the nettle, the myrtle will come up.”—something so completely new and different that only a supernatural transformation could make it possible.
The picture here is of a transformation so remarkable, it could only be attributed to the supernatural power of God.

No less remarkable is the supernatural transformation that must happen for sinful men to be made holy. So radical is the transformation that the old must die to the new.

It’s the death-pain of repentance that leads to the joy of transformation! Isaiah’s message would ultimately blossom into joy for those who hear—the joy of transformation!

All of us want grace, many of us want transformation, but few of us understand that the grace and joy of transformation is released through the gift of repentance. How we ought to pray for a repentant heart.

As we come to the Lord’s table, we come in the awe and wonder that in Jesus Christ, we receive the glory of God as our inheritance; we relieved the holiness of God as our righteousness, we are delivered from the dread of God’s wrath; we receive the mercy of God; we embrace the mission of God; and we inherit the joy of God. All of this comes to us in Christ. Let no sin keep you from Him.

**Communion:** Isaiah 55:6-7

*Bread: Isaiah 53:4-6*

Jesus took upon Himself the oracle of woe that we deserved so that we might inherit the oracle of blessing. The bread that you hold represents the bread of life, the body of Jesus, torn on your behalf.

*Cup: 1 Cor 11:23-26*

In eating this bread and drinking this cup, we proclaim the Lord’s death as we await His coming.

“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!” (Isa 6:8).

We who know Christ have such cause for rejoicing because while we have been saved from the penalty of sin, the day is coming when we will be saved from the very presence of sin. We will stand in God’s presence “faultless and with great joy” (Jude 1:24); We will see Him just as He is (1 John 3:2); We will not inherit the oracle of woe/doom because there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus; We will receive the oracle of blessing: “Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God.”