

Text: Isaiah 6:1-8.

Trinity Sunday.

**May 27, 2018.**

Grace and peace are yours through the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Trinity Sunday. One of the most confusing teachings of the Bible. One God, but Father, Son and Holy Spirit. One God or three? Three Gods or one? Usually this is one of the first questions people have when starting Bible 101. I can't tell you how many people have said at the start, "Pastor, I don't get this. What's the deal with the Trinity? I'm going to have a real problem with this." So we don't start with the Trinity. We start with our sin and God's love. Then when we get to the Trinity, I hear people say, "Pastor, I still don't get this. But I know God loves me even though I'm a sinner. I don't really get that either." It was the same for Isaiah. When he saw God he didn't launch into the Athanasian Creed, trying to rationally explain the Trinity. Seeing God, he realized his guilt. God sent a messenger to assure him, "Your guilt is taken away." Empowered by forgiveness, Isaiah said, "He am I! Send me!" It's exactly the same for us. I am ruined because of my sin. God sent a messenger to assure me, "Your guilt is taken away." We all respond, "Here am I! Send me! Here am I! Send me!"

What a scene Isaiah saw! I get shivers up my spine to just think about it! He saw the LORD! The LORD! The LORD! What would that look like? High and exalted. Worthy of worship and praise. Seated on a throne, like the true and everlasting and all-powerful King he is. Look up to the ceiling and picture this. Lift your eyes to the rafters. Can you see the LORD! His train fills the temple. We maybe only see a train on a wedding dress and if it goes out five feet that's huge. But the train of the LORD's robe fills the entire temple! Imagine his robe filling the whole space here. It's wrapped around you here in the front and around you in the back, spun around your legs three times and it stretches from this corner to that corner.

And that's not all. There's angels, seraphs, fiery creatures, how many we don't know, maybe too many to count, wings out their backs and wings over their faces and wings over their feet. Even angels have to be covered in humility before the LORD, the king. And if the sight of these angels isn't enough, listen to the sound, "Holy! Holy! Holy!" I think even if you don't know the Hebrew language in which these seraphs sang, you can appreciate the sound of the Hebrew song. Qadosh! Qadosh! Qadosh! And they are singing over and over. Qadosh! Qadosh! Qadosh! And they are calling back and forth. Holy! Holy! Holy! Three times holy so we don't miss it. Three times holy for the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Holy! Holy! Holy! To fill the ears and fill the heart.

The whole earth is full of his glory. It's not like we have to come here to get a glimpse of God's glory. Or we have to walk by a lake to see God's majesty. Or we have to hunt in some obscure corner of the earth to find a bit of God's glory. His glory is everywhere. His glory fills the entire earth. You can't get away from it. God's glory is not the cheap frozen pizza that has three little pieces of pepperoni and you have to hunt to find them. God's glory is Papa John's, where the advertisements say the pepperoni goes to the very edge of the pizza and spills over the edge. God's glory is in his wonderful creation of you, just as you are. God's glory is in that phone in your pocket as he gave someone the intelligence and ability to make this. God's glory is in the medicines that he uses to heal us, the food and water he uses to keep us alive. The whole earth is full of his glory! He is Holy! Holy! Holy!

That glory makes us shudder in our shoes. Every square inch of the temple shook. Every doorpost, every threshold, down to the very foundations. Maybe you haven't ever felt an earthquake. Just a tiny one is a

shot to the heart. It rocks the very building. It rocks your very world. Literally.

Can you imagine seeing this? The LORD! The highness. The throne. The train wrapped around you. The seraphs. The singing. The Holy! The shaking. The quaking. Can you see it? Can you feel it? Isaiah saw it. He felt it. And how did he react? Did he jump up and down for joy? Was he elated to see God? Was he glad that God finally came down to earth and did something, finally showed a little power to make all these unbelievers believe? No! He cried out. Probably fell to his knees or even on his face. Woe to me! I am ruined! I am done for! I am in big trouble! I'm going to hell! My lips are unclean. And my eyes have seen the King! And he is Qadosh. And I am a sinner, a big, bad sinner.

Woe to me! I am ruined! I am done for! I am a big, bad sinner. Notice Isaiah didn't say, "God, I'm basically a good guy. That's good enough, right?" Holy! He didn't say, "I know I've made a few bad choices, but I can fix that if I try a little harder." All Isaiah could hear was, "Holy! Qadosh! Holy!" God, I'm not. I can't be. My lips are unclean. Please don't play a recording of everything I've ever said. And please don't play a video of the time I could have said something about you and just stayed silent. I am ruined! I am done for! I have no solution.

But God had a solution. And God did it all. God did it all, without Isaiah's help. God sent a seraph, a smoldering servant, a miraculous messenger, with a smoldering coal, a fiery fragment from God's own altar. The fire touched Isaiah's lips. Not for the burning punishment of hell. But to bring the pyre of purification, the fire of forgiveness. Personally, visually, this coal touched Isaiah's lips, the very part of his body that brought him guilt. And the seraph spoke soothing sounds of saving love. "Your guilt is taken away. Your sin is atoned for." Your guilt. Your guilt. You know, that nasty voice that won't let you sleep. That terrible restlessness of the heart that won't let you forget that one sin, from decades ago. Your guilt. Let's talk about it. Your guilt is taken away. Your guilt is thrown in the sewer. That's what the Hebrew word sounds like. It's in the sewer. Leave it there. God took your guilt away and threw it in the sewer. Your guilt is garbage. Your sin is sewage. It's gone. It's covered. God's eyes can't see it, because all God sees is Jesus. All God sees is holy, on you. Holy, in your heart. Holy, on your soul. Your guilt? Gone! Your sin? In the sewer! Your holiness? On your lips.

And not just for Isaiah! For you! Don't you see?! The exact same thing is going to happen, for you, personally, visually, in just a few minutes. You probably wish I would stop talking so we can get to it. God's messenger is going to go to God's altar. He is going to take the burning coal of Jesus' true body and Jesus' own blood. And he is going to put it on your lips, the very part of the body that brings your guilt, or your hands, the part of the body you use to sin, and that same fire of forgiveness, that same pyre of purification will throw your guilt in the garbage and toss your sin in the sewer. And God's own messenger will say, "This has touched your lips. Your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for. Go in peace." Can you see why we sing, "Holy, holy, holy," before we take Jesus' body and blood? Can you see the connection? Your guilt, yours, is taken away. Your sin, yours, is atoned for, personally, visually, eternally.

What a change guilt being gone worked in Isaiah. He went from wretch on his knees to voluntary servant. He jumped up and down and waved his hand to volunteer like Horshack in Welcome Back Kotter. Here am I! Send me! Here am I! Send me! It wasn't going to be easy. Uzziah, a good king who followed God, had died. Read the section right after this and God promised Isaiah, "You'll preach, but they won't listen. You'll speak, but they won't hear." Didn't matter. Isaiah's guilt was gone. He was going to spread the good news. Isaiah's sin was covered. He was going to cover the land with this good news.

Maybe the most obvious application we make of the words, "Here am I! Send me!" is about pastors. It's always a high point of my year to go to our Seminary and sing with hundreds and see young men seated and squirming. Eight or twelve or maybe twenty years ago, they answered God's call to go for him. They studied and schooled and now the day has arrived. They don't know where they are going. They didn't fill out a resume or do a single interview. They only knew this, "God will go with me," So they said, "Here am I! Send me! Here am I! Send me!" We need more men to answer that call. We need more men, young and old to say with Isaiah, "Here am I! Send me!" We don't just have one vacancy at our church. There are 125 vacancies around our church body. And only 25 men who graduated. Do the math. And trends look like it's going to get worse before better. Pastors are baby boomers, too. And the number of men retiring is about 50 a year and the number of men graduating is 25 a year. Do the math. And there are more pastors needed to go in our country and be the seraphs and say, "Your guilt is taken away. Your sin atoned for." Look at the young man next to you. Pray for him to be one of those seraphs. Encourage him to think about being a pastor. Young man, I'm talking to you. What could be better than putting the burning coal of Jesus' body and blood on the hearts of those carrying guilt? What could be better than putting water on a person's head and washing their sins away? What could be better than to be God's angel, speaking the words of forgiveness, "God, our Heavenly Father, has been merciful to us and has given his only Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins"? But let's not limit these words to pastors. Every Christian gets to say with Isaiah, "Here am I! Send me!" God wants all of us to wave our hands and jump up and down to willingly volunteer. I can talk to my friend next door. I can invite the guy in the next cubicle at work. I have a family member who is down in the dumps, feels ruined. I can tell them, "Your guilt is taken away. Your sin is atoned for." Here am I, LORD! Send me, LORD! Send me! Amen.