

HERE AM I. SEND ME! Isaiah 6:1-8

Intro: Isaiah, a young man and connected with the royal family, went to church one day after the ruler of his country died. It was a day that would profoundly change his life. He went to the temple at night, it seems, and it seems that he was alone in that great hall. The coals on the incense altar were glowing mysteriously, and the incense ascended in a cloud barely visible.

He tells the story. "In the year..."

I wonder if Isaiah was alone in the Temple. Do you think he was? If there were others present, they were NOT present as part of the vision. They did not hear this question of the Lord Almighty. As far as we know, among the children of men, only Isaiah heard the Lord's inquiry.

He seems to be on the spot, actually. He alone is interacting with the hosts of heaven. The seraphim are ministering to him. His lips are purified. He is caught in the drama of the throne room, and no one else.

A solitary figure before the throne, he shudders with fear. The darkness of the room is torn by brilliant light -the glory of the Lord. The building is shaking. The smoke of the divine presence is billowing. The seraphim are calling in shrill cries, joining together in praise and adoration. The splendor of the scene is beyond words.

Thrice repeated is his holiness, which is the source of all holiness in creation. And his glory (*kabod*), his glory fills the whole earth. His glory lies behind every visible reality in the physical world. The weightiness of God covers the earth.

As if to proclaim and assure us of that glory ever present in the earth, a shudder rises from the very foundations. The glory of God sends a tremor through creation, and the massive doors of the temple shake in agreement with the song of the seraphim.

I. The Throne is not vacant:

Uzziah, "My strength is God," was dead, and in a time of world turmoil the throne of Israel was empty, but the throne of heaven...

- A. He rules over CREATION.
- B. He rules over NATIONS.
 - 1. God can move kings.
 - 2. God can move nations. The throne is not empty.
- C. He rules over PERSONS: God has a kingdom.
 - 1. "My kingdom is not of this world" Jesus told Pilate.
 - 2. The throne of your life is occupied today. It may be occupied by self, money or pleasure--or by the Lord of glory. But he still acts in the affairs of persons such as you and me.

***Mine eyes have seen the KING, Isaiah said as he gazed in wonderment. That's what we need this morning; to see the KING.

II. THE FIRE IS NOT OUT: Abraham saw a burning lamp when he made the covenant with God. Moses saw the burning bush. Egypt saw the burning hail fall from heaven. Sodom and Gomorrah perished in the fire and brimstone. "Our God is a consuming FIRE."

**I have started many a fire. I know that when the fire dies down, you can blow on the coals and it will come to life again.

A. The Fire of God Purges Sin

***Seraphim are the “burning ones.” The darkness envelopes him again, and young Isaiah is suddenly struck by what seems to be an inappropriate presence in the room. While other lips are speaking in praise and worship, his lips are sealed by impurity. While holiness is hailed as the hallmark of God’s character, young Isaiah feels distinctly unholy. His presence seems almost a desecration of the holy place. He is afraid for his life. He cries out his confession, torn from him and offered without specific bidding in the presence of the angels and the Lord. He is not worthy to sing with the seraphim or to stand with them in the presence of the throne. He cannot join in their song. He is defiled.

1. The fire helps us SEE our sin.

***Did you read about the man who went to sleep in a dumpster and ended up in the garbage truck? What a nightmare! The last fellow who made this mistake did not survive the compacting, but this man made it alive through 25 trash compactings in that truck. He did sustain a broken leg.

What does it feel like to be compacted with a truckload of garbage? I picture this man suspended in a wad of newspaper and trash bags. He tries to remain spread-eagled so as not to fold any of his limbs when the compacting begins. I imagine him hearing again the whirr of the hydraulics as the truck begins to compact the garbage. Pressure increases against his body. He is helpless to stop it. The newspaper and plastic bags press against his face. He has difficulty breathing. Just about the time that he can stand no more, the pressure releases and his paper prison sags. He takes a deep breath and waits for the next compression.

Isaiah probably thought he was clean -- until he got before the fire of God. Then all he could cry is: “I am unclean.”

2. The fire brings confession. The conviction of God burns like fire in the bones and heart. It is fiercely hot. The forgiveness of God is complete and irrevocable. Both guilt and sin are gone.

B. The fire of God MARKS the Sinner

*** Scientist tell us about our lip prints are as unique as our fingerprints. When the coal touched Isaiah lips, he was not only cleansed but marked.

1. When God touches your life he changes you forever.

2. We bear in our bodies the marks of the Lord Jesus.

C. The Fire of God OPENS our Ears. Isaiah hadn’t heard the Lord until his lips were cleansed. After that pronouncement of cleansing, then he heard God speaking. Handel’s MESSIAH was inspired by the words of Isaiah.

D. Tongues of fire at Pentecost are a burning in the bones.

III. THE TASK IS NOT DONE: There had been prophets before and servants of God, and there were when Isaiah entered the church that day. But Isaiah found out that God is still looking, still asking for men and women who are willing to follow him.

***Newsroom when fire call comes in. All city desk reporters are standing and waiting to get the assignment - everyone wanting it. I got a lot of those calls and had to have my suit jackets cleaned.

A. God is still ASKING THE QUESTION: "Whom shall I send?" He asks this question before he gives the particulars. He wants volunteers without strings attached. Isaiah was a friend of kings and rulers; an advisor to the crown. Isaiah's assignment ended up being intensely political. He was as much a statesman as a prophet.

B. God still has a MESSAGE TO GIVE. The world is perishing without Christ. God is still calling for righteousness and justice, not expediency. Our hope is in God.

C. Men still Need to HEAR IT: Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people, God says.

The truth needs to be spoken in our city. Who will stand up for the truth? As a people we are being cursed by the words that go out on the airwaves and in print. God is asking for volunteers.

D. SOMEONE NEEDS TO SAY, "SEND ME."

***They called her "the lady with the lamp." Every night she made the rounds of the hospital, carrying that lamp. Altogether, she passed along four miles of beds, giving a smile or a word of greeting. She was in charge here, along with 38 other nurses, caring for the wounded British soldiers in the Crimean War in 1854.

It was the first time that English women had served in a military hospital. Soldiers were dying by the hundreds, nearly half of those hospitalized died, mostly because of unsanitary conditions. The lady with the lamp worked to achieve sanitary conditions, and she cut the death rate from 50 percent to 2 percent.

Considered the founder of modern nursing, her name is Florence Nightingale. Born to a wealthy English couple, Florence Nightingale was a volunteer. She stepped forward when stories of the suffering of British soldiers reached England. She went unpaid to walk those four miles of beds, helping those who were wounded and dying. During the Crimean War she lay very ill for 12 days with raging fever but refused to go home when soldiers were sick and dying.

CONCLUSION: I was in church one day when I was eighteen years old. I was devoted to Christ, and I was planning to be a journalist. But in that worship hour, I heard the Lord speaking to me personally, and he was asking this question, "Whom shall I send?" I knew in my heart that I was called by God to give him an answer. And I knew that my highest and best calling was to step forward as a volunteer, serving Christ every day of my life with all my heart.