

New Vision

Week 4 • Woe and Go: God is Enough series • Isaiah 6:1-8 • 06/24/2018

Main Point

When we see God for Who He truly is, we recognize our sinfulness and then we find our strength in God to move forward and grow in Christ.

Introduction

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

What three words come to mind when you hear the word “God”? Was “glory,” “holy”, or “perfect” one of the words you thought of? Why or why not?

What would you say if someone asked you to describe God’s holiness or perfection?

How should we respond when we are confronted with God’s glory?

In our culture today, we do not properly understand holiness and perfection. We can often think that holiness is a matter of what is done, while perfection is a way that we compare or describe an experience. Yet when we reflect upon God, we are not looking alone at what He has done or how He is compared, rather his holiness and perfection are a part of His nature. It is who God is, independent of what we may think we know about Him.

When we are confronted with God’s glorious nature, the only acceptable response is worship. Worship is our response, both personal and corporate, to God for Who He is and what He has done; expressed in and by the things we say and the way we live. Today we will see how the prophet Isaiah came face to face with the glory of God and worshiped by confessing his sin and surrendering to God’s will.

Understanding the Text

1. The Consistency of God's Holiness

Have a volunteer read Isaiah 6:1-4.

The death of Uzziah ended a long period of stability and created the potential for a national crisis. It was matched with this being a time when of unfaithfulness by the people of Judah. Empty ritualism and hypocrisy characterized their worship. In the midst of this time of wondering if the stability would continue, Isaiah saw the Lord seated on a high and lofty throne. The high and lofty throne was in the temple. Being on the throne

emphasizes the Lord as the true King of Judah and being in the temple emphasizes His holiness. Judah had lost its earthly king, Uzziah, but the true King is always on His throne.

Describe a time when the things that you thought were stable became "shaken" or went away? How were you reminded of the Lord's sovereignty during this time?

How does your understanding of God's holiness compare to Isaiah's experience?

In the presence of God, the Seraphim cried out, "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty." The Hebrew word translated holy comes from a root that means "to separate" or "to cut off." By declaring God to be "holy" three times, the Seraphim were acknowledging the perfection or completion of God's holiness. This reminds us that there is no one holy like the Lord (1 Samuel 2:2).

What measures could we take to guard against minimizing God in our thinking?

2. Our Woe Compared to God's Holiness

Have a volunteer read Isaiah 6:5-7.

Isaiah 6:5 records the emotional and spiritual response of Isaiah to the vision of God's holiness. Isaiah was convicted of his sinfulness and the wickedness of his fellow citizens in Judah.

What three reasons did Isaiah give for saying "Woe is me, for I am ruined"? In what ways are we like Isaiah in each of these statements?

Isaiah's vision of God's holiness had a profound effect on him. Our understanding of God's holiness should dramatically impact our lives as well. God's holiness is too profound for us to really wrap our minds around, but when we get just a taste of it, we are humbled by our sin and aware of our dependence on Him. This is what Isaiah experienced when he described himself as "a man of unclean lips" (v. 5). Like Isaiah, we must repent in acknowledgement of our personal sinfulness.

Too often we look at our sin against others differently from when we sin against God. Yet, Isaiah realized that he was completely guilty of his sin when he understood the holiness of God. In a way we are all guilty of treason. We like to think that we are good compared to others, when in fact we need to see ourselves as guilty. In other words, we need to see our sin the way that God sees our sin: it's an offense to His holiness and can only be forgiven through the atonement of the sacrificial blood of Jesus.

Have you ever reflected on how truly sinful you are when compared with God? How does this make you feel about yourself? About God? About your relationship with Him?

What do you think Pastor Brady meant when he said that he was guilty of treason?

What did God do for Isaiah that made him able to serve God? How does Christ make us able to serve God?

Isaiah learned two things about himself that forever changed his theology: his goodness was not that good, and his strengths were not that strong. We know we're not perfect but we're not as bad as that person or those people. But when Isaiah had his vision of encountering the presence of God, he didn't find himself in a lineup with other sinners. He found himself face to face with God. His conclusion was not "I am above average." It was "I am lost." Ruined. Doomed.

After touching Isaiah's unclean mouth, the seraphim pronounced that his wickedness was removed, and his sin was atoned for. Isaiah's unclean lips didn't become clean because of his effort or desire to change, but by God's grace alone. Often those who have done wrong seek to earn God's forgiveness. Yet God forgives sin because He is gracious, not because we earn it. His perfect grace is another aspect of His holiness. Like Isaiah, we too can be made able to serve God by looking to Christ's sacrifice on the cross for our sins (1 Peter 3:18).

What was Isaiah's response to God's atoning grace?

How has disobedience in the past affected your relationship with God? What steps can you take today to restore your relationship and receive God's forgiveness and mercy?

3. Our call to go with God's holiness.

Have a volunteer to read Isaiah 6:8.

We are never going to do great things for God unless we realize that God wants to do something great in us. When we realize that our sin is atoned by the blood of Christ, we have the security and abiding presence of God to move from our place of woefulness to a desire to go and share of the power of Christ in our lives.

Notice how Isaiah didn't hesitate when he volunteered for the Lord's service. He immediately said, "Here am I. Send me!" When God calls us to His service, our response also should be an unhesitating "Send me." We shouldn't just dream of what we can do for God, we should listen for His call on our lives and be willing to surrender our lives for His service.

Isaiah was not merely a consumer of God's glory, he was consumed by God's glory. Why is that distinction important?

What would it look like for you to be consumed by God's glory in worship this week?

The call to go in response to God's holiness is evident in other places. Peter gives the exhortation in 1 Peter 1:16, "Be holy as I am holy." The writer of Hebrews calls in Hebrews 12:14 for people to live in a peaceful relationship with everyone and to pursue holiness so that they can see God in our lives. Therefore, we have

the call, that since we have been made holy through the blood of Christ, to pursue holiness in our daily lives which involves our faith and obedience.

What does this look like in our lives? It means that we evaluate our walk with Christ. Am I disturbed by lostness? (Woe) As our measures state; is my yes on the table? (Go)

1. **What advice would you give to a friend who is having trouble moving beyond regret for past disobedience to the Lord?**
2. **How has God shown you mercy despite your failure to obey? How has that helped you understand His character? How does this affect your obedience today?**

Application

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

What affect should God's holy and glorious character have on the way we worship? (Isaiah 6:1-4)

What affect should God's holy and glorious character have on the choices you make this week? (Isaiah 6:5-7)

How can you begin to be somebody that goes for the Lord? (Isaiah 6:8)

Pray

Pray that God would reveal His holiness in a powerful way to your group and all of our church. Pray that in response to God's holiness, all would be humble, repentant, and filled with worship. Pray that your group would grow together by encouraging one another to live in awe of the glory and holiness of God.

Commentary

| ISAIAH 6:1-8

6:1. The years of Uzziah's reign were also a time of unfaithfulness by the people of Judah. Empty ritualism and hypocrisy characterized their worship. The death of Uzziah ended a long period of stability and created the potential for a national crisis.

Isaiah saw the Lord seated on a high and lofty throne. The high and lofty throne was in the temple. Being on the throne emphasizes the Lord as the true King of Judah and being in the temple emphasizes His holiness. Judah had lost its earthly king, Uzziah, but the true King is always on His throne.

6:2. Isaiah saw seraphim standing above the Lord. Ancient oriental kings surrounded themselves with a court of servants, and the Lord appeared in a similar way to Isaiah. The word “seraphim” (“burning ones” in Hebrew) is the plural of “seraph.”

6:3. The seraphim called to one another in a responsive, or antiphonal, chant. The key characteristic of God lauded by these angels was His holiness. “Holy” is repeated three times for emphasis. Holy is the key adjective in describing the uniqueness of God. Holiness incorporates the sum total of His perfection. Holiness describes the presence of complete perfection and the absence of any imperfection.

6:4. The seraphim’s hymn rocked the foundations of the heavenly temple. The smoke that filled the temple probably came from incense and added the sensory experience of smell to Isaiah’s vision.

6:5. Isaiah’s response to these heavenly sights and sounds was an overpowering recognition of sin. Isaiah looked at the Lord and then looked at himself, and his conclusion was “I am ruined.” Isaiah referred to his unclean lips, representing complete sinfulness

6:6. Isaiah expressed despair concerning his conviction of sin and knew there was nothing he could do to remove his sin. If the Lord did not provide a remedy, no remedy could be found. In His mercy the Lord sent one of the seraphim who took a glowing coal from the altar and approached Isaiah with it in his hand.

6:7. Isaiah declared himself “a man of unclean lips” (v. 5), and a seraph touched his lips in response to his confession of sin. These terms are clearly symbolic and indicate God alone can forgive our sins. Just as the sinfulness of Isaiah’s lips symbolized all of his sin (v. 5), “the touching of his lips” symbolized the removal of all his sin. As a result of this act, the prophet’s wickedness was removed, his sin was atoned for. The concept of atonement implies the necessity of payment and a substitute to redeem the sinner.

6:8 After removing the prophet’s sin, the Lord issued a call to service. Salvation must precede service. The Lord sought a volunteer to deliver His message of warning to the people of Judah. The Lord was surrounded by angelic messengers (seraphim), but He desired a human messenger to confront the sinful nation. Isaiah, after he was cleansed from his sin, said “send me.”