

A Lord Who Show Up

The Holy Trinity

May 27, 2018

Isaiah 6:1-6

¹ In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple. ² Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. ³ And one called to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!" ⁴ And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke. ⁵ And I said: "Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!" ⁶ Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a burning coal that he had taken with tongs from the altar. ⁷ And he touched my mouth and said: "Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for." ⁸ And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" Then I said, "Here I am! Send me."

IN THE NAME OF JESUS.

King Uzziah is dead. And you are not.

For us to say that someone is not dead has one speaking of God who creates, sustains, and restores life.

This morning, the Day of the Holy Trinity, we speak of who God is. God, we confess in the Athanasian Creed, is the Creator, and is infinite, and eternal, and almighty.

If he did things toward us in his infinite presence, and in his eternity, and in his raw almighty power, we would not know what to do with it. It would not be good news. For we are creatures, and he created us to receive things here in time, here in our lives where we live, and in the way we were created to receive gifts.

He created us to receive gifts in our mouths—food and drink. Or in our ears—words and music. Or in our

hands, as we receive gifts. Or in our eyes, art and beauty. Or in our noses—sweet smells, aromas. That's how he created us. So if we're going to receive gifts from him, it will be through our ears, our eyes, our touch, our taste, or our smell—through our created senses.

If we are to receive gifts from God, it will come in the way, then, of being finite, so we can comprehend it; and being located in place and in time, so we can grab onto it at a place and day we can meet up with it.

But God is Creator, and infinite, and eternal, and almighty.

So Isaiah is given to see God. Isaiah is a prophet, so he is given to see God in a way that no one else is, for the prophet is given a view of the heavenly council, which he is then to speak and reveal to Israel.

Isaiah is given to look at God—he sees the Lord sitting upon his eternal Throne. He is the Lord who created all life, who sustains all life, and if life is going to be restored, it will be by him.

But he comes to Isaiah in a way will see Isaiah him. He presents himself to Isaiah in physical form—a King sitting on a throne—so that Isaiah's eyes see this and his ears hear the words spoken around the Throne.

So Isaiah now looks at two things: a throne and a casket. He sees the Lord of life sitting on the eternal throne, and he sees King Uzziah dead.

Uzziah is the king in Jerusalem. He is in the lineage of King David. The promised Messiah will come, then, from Uzziah's line. But Uzziah, after having served a successful kingship, is dead. So Isaiah has the two things: a king on the Throne of life, and a king in a casket.

The casket belongs to Isaiah, too. Isaiah knows this. The sin which rules in our world, bringing death to all, is never more evident than when looking at a dead body. This belongs to Isaiah, too. Isaiah, too, is from the lineage of Adam and Eve. He's of sinful flesh. Isaiah 6:5:

And [Isaiah] said: “Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!”

We have more than one problem with sin. One problem is, of course, our own sin. It is the sin we are guilty of. It is the sin of our heart and the guilt we bear for not loving others as much as we love ourselves. So Isaiah says, **“Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips.”**

But Isaiah goes further. Because, we have another problem with sin. It’s not just the sin we are guilty of, it also the sin we live in as we live out our lives in this world.

This is not just the sin we have done by our own actions of malice or our own failures to love; it is also the sin that has been done against us and the sin done around us—it all impacts us. It is the sin of living in a world where we are treated brutally or wrongfully and our neighbor is treated brutally and wrongfully. We call this shame.

We live in our own shame and we live in the shame of the sinful world we belong to. So Isaiah says not only,

“Woe is me! ... for I am a man of unclean lips,

but also,

Woe is me! ... for I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips.”

We live in a world of death, and, as sinners, we belong to that death. It is as if we are standing alongside Isaiah and we see King Uzziah’s casket. All we see is sin, it is all death, our king is dead, *Woe is me*.

Then the Lord shows up. Isaiah 6:6:

⁶ Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a burning coal that he had taken with tongs from the altar. ⁷ And he touched my mouth and said: “Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for.”

The guilt taken from Isaiah is Isaiah's guilt. But that is also taking away the shame Isaiah has from the world around him. He sin atoned for is Isaiah's sin, but it is also the sin belonging to Isaiah as he lives in the midst of a people of unclean lips.

This is the Lord speaking from his throne.

You and I would have no clue what the Lord has ruled at his throne in Heaven, because all we can know is what we see and hear and touch, taste, and smell in the world around us. And at the end of the day, everything in the world around us ends up like Uzziah, a king in a casket. But the Lord who is infinite, eternal, and almighty, locates himself for us. He comes up to us in our lives. He shows up in our personal space and on our clock.

Just as Isaiah can say not that God came to him just once-upon-a-time, or came to him spiritually or in his thoughts and feelings, but can say, specifically, that God came to him and it was located in the year that Uzziah died—that is, it's on the calendar just like a birthday—and in that year the Lord showed up right in front of my eyes, he was seated on the throne with seraphim angels, and just as Matthew or John can say that it was under Pontius Pilate that they saw Jesus their Lord crucified, just as surely, you and I can say, in our lives, on our calendar, my Lord came to me.

And when I told my Lord that I could not look upon him because I am a person of the unclean lips of my own sin and of the unclean lips of the people among whom I live, my Lord said to me,

“Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for.”

He touches our lips not with the holy burning coals—that gift belonged to Isaiah, not to us.

But he touches our lips with holy Body and holy Blood.

Your guilt is taken away, your sin atoned for. Both the guilt belonging to you due to your own sin, due to your own failure of love and generosity to your neighbor, but also the guilt of your neighbor among whom you live and by whom you are brought into shame. It is all taken away. You are clean. And you belong not to the casket, but to the Throne of life.

This is the gift to you of the Father who sends forth his Son to shed the holy blood to atone for the sin of

the world. And this is the gift to you of the Son, who, sent from the Father, redeems you and makes you his own. And this is the gift to you from the Holy Spirit, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, and who brings to you from the heavenly throne the words of your Lord Jesus.

As we confessed in the Athanasian Creed, those who on the last day are judged to have done good are those who have faith in the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ. And this faith is your cleansing from sin, your salvation.

IN THE NAME OF JESUS.