

Ascension Lutheran Church

Pastor Godkin's Sermon for the week of February 7, 2010

Sinners Purified in the Holy One (Isaiah 6:1-11)

Grace, mercy and peace to you from God our Father and Jesus Christ. Amen. The text for today's homily is from the sixth chapter of Isaiah. Our Lord says to us:

"Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!"

⁴And the foundations of the threshold shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke. ⁵And 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!"

This is the Word of God.

Dear friends in the Lord Jesus Christ, The Lord is high and lifted up; angels hid their faces and their feet in His presence; the foundations of the threshold of God's house shake; it is filled with smoke. This is a picture of God's holiness. Isaiah's vision here is an overwhelming and awesome depiction of God's mighty power and His glory and His position as the Almighty One, the Creator of heaven and earth. The picture of God we have here in these first few verses of Isaiah 6 shows Him as transcendent, and altogether pure and good and holy and revered by the heavenly host and yet, ultimately, unapproachable for the unholy.

It's a bit like a moth to a flame. Moths are very attracted to light bulbs, for example. And yet if they get too close to one, they will get burned up. It is like that with you and me as well. We are attracted to God, we want to know Him; we want to be with Him and yet, if we come to Him on our terms through some other way than through His Son we will not see His holiness and His awesome power. Sometimes His perfect holiness can seem frightening. Because as the Sovereign, righteous Judge, He has the right to condemn us.

But to fear God is not an unhealthy thing. As the most High and our Creator He demands that we have for Him utmost respect and reverence and as a sense of awe and wonder. Because if we keep God as number 1 in our lives if we surely abide in His will.

But the closer we get to God the more we become aware of the extent of His holiness. If we look at Peter, what happened when Jesus gave the disciple the miraculous catch of fish? He fell down at Jesus' knees and said, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." Peter saw that Jesus is the Holy One, the Son of God and at that moment in time his unworthiness. It was almost too much for him to bear.

Or if we look at Isaiah; in his vision he saw God and the foundations of the house and he said, "Woe is me! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips." He said, "For my eyes have seen the Lord of hosts!" Isaiah felt like a man who was about to die, about to be consumed by the Eternal, glorious God.

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The psalmist asks the question in psalm 24, "Whom may stand in His holy place?" He answers his question and says, "Who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to an idol or swear by what is false." Would you say you are worthy? Do you meet or do you fall short of us do by yourselves.

Isaiah knew he fell far short of that and he was scolded. He said, "I am a man of unclean lips." The holiness of God threatened him. For God judges in and rightly so. If we take our own value of God, if we have contempt for our neighbour, if we covet something of our neighbour, if we tell a lie or if we do anything not out of love for God or our neighbour, that is called sin. It is an offense to our Most High Creator and it is punishable by death.

C.S. Lewis, the great British scholar and Christian writer once said, "How little people know who think that holiness is dull. When one meets God, it is the real thing, it is irresistible." God is the real thing, friends. Perhaps holiness is not a quality of God that we tend to think about as much as His love. The holy, holy is intertwined with His love. The angels in the vision called to one another, "Holy, whole earth is full of His glory!"

God's holy character is good for His creation and is worshiped and adored. The word "holy" in Hebrew means the opposite of common, the opposite of ordinary. Yes, God is extraordinary! And His love is truly extraordinary.

It is significant that the house of the Lord was filled with smoke. There was smoke because of the heat of His holiness. Fire, it essentially has two purposes: one is to purify and the other is to destroy. When Isaiah cried out in fear for his salvation, God answered him with grace. He sent a seraphim with a burning coal that he had taken from the altar because it was hot. The angel touched Isaiah's mouth with it. He said, "Your guilt is taken away, and your sin is atoned for."

This is what sets Him apart as the One who is set apart. In essence it is ordinary. Yes, God is extraordinary! And His love is truly extraordinary.

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We see here that God's holiness purifies sinners. This is a foreshadow of Christ in the New Testament. Jesus is the Holy One and He is holy on our behalf. "Christ Jesus has become for us wisdom from God—holiness and redemption". It is an alien righteousness.

The Bible calls Jesus the only begotten Son of God, and only Son of God. It means that Jesus is a special relationship to the Father. He is set apart by faith. God has made you holy with Him. He has set you in holy Baptism. He has sent the Holy Spirit to purify you and sanctify you as sisters and brothers of Christ, redeemed from sin, death, and the power of the devil.

And so our fear of judgement melts away as we find assurance in the grace of God, in the sweet, wonderful good news of this. It is true food for the soul.

Who ascends the hill of the Lord? Who stands and says, "He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to an idol or swear by what is false." Would you say you are worthy? Do you meet or do you fall short of us do by yourselves.

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When we come to repentance and turn our lives over to Him, He forgives and provides eternal life, but He promises us and gives us strength in our walk with Him. We are feet for a special purpose. He begins to change us, a new heart. In refreshing us with the forgiveness He gives, He desires for us to serve Him and to share His sweet gift

to Him who loves us, not only does He want to be with us now, to lead and guide us, but He sets us back on our feet from the inside out and He gives us the strength through Christ to awaken in our hearts the news with others.

Lord say, 'Whom shall I send, and me.'"
es, "Do not be afraid; from now on they brought their boats to land, they were with the Holy One and yet now they were close to Him. Jesus says "Do not be afraid" because He is the loving Saviour. He invites sinners to dine with Him, to spend time with Him in His Word, to enjoy Him, and to share in His precious work. What a privilege and opportunity for our church!

They left everything because they knew they had someone who loved them. Friends, with Jesus you have a friend. Our life may not be easy, but with Jesus as our Holy One, we have the love of God going with us. His Word has a power that no one can take away. He is the Lord. May we ever sing His praises, cling to His Word, and keep His holy will close to our hearts. As the famous hymn says, "Holy, holy, holy, three persons, blessed Trinity!"

Something far better in the Holy One who dwells closer than a brother. His Word has a great purpose and we are called to live by it. He has sanctified you and made you holy through His Word, and keep His holy will close to your hearts, merciful and mighty! God in

ding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

ding, keep your hearts and minds

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