

Grace, mercy, and peace be unto you from God, our Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Amen! Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

[Background]

[1] In the year King Uzziah died...

In that year, an amazing story happened! . . .

“Who was King Uzziah?” you ask.

King Uzziah – He was the king of Judah,

and his reign tells us that the story is very real

—a real time and a real place in history.

[2] The Kingdom of Israel had split into two kingdoms, the divided kingdom.

Divided Ditty...

[3] North, [4] South, [5] Israel, [6] Judah, [7] 19, [8] 20, [9] 0, [10] 8, YEAH!

— Israel in the north and Judah in the south —

[11] King Uzziah had reigned over the Southern Kingdom, Judah. And he was good!

And in the year he died,

That would be about seven-and-a-half centuries before Christ,

Isaiah, son of Amoz, one of the earliest prophets

in that southern kingdom Judah, had a vision.

This is the amazing story (vv 1–2).

[Vision]

[12] Isaiah sees himself in the temple.

[13] Isaiah see himself in the heavenly temple,

[14] which formed the pattern for the earthly temple,

[15] where the sacrifices were daily made for the people’s sin.

[16-17] In heaven, Isaiah sees God surrounded by seraphim,

one of the orders of angels,

beings created by God to serve him and mankind.

Isaiah describes them as having six wings,

[18] two covering their faces, [19] two covering their feet, and [20] two for flying.

The seraphim begin singing to one another.

[21] Their song: “*Holy, holy, holy*” (v 3).

The threefold repetition announces the Trinity,
three holy persons in one holy God.

Modeled on the Athanasian Creed,

we can say, ***“The Father is holy, the Son holy, and the Holy Spirit holy; and yet they are not three holies, but one holy.”***

“Holy, holy, holy”

We call that song the Sanctus, and we sing it
with the angels, archangels, and all the company of heaven.
We sing it when we come to Holy Communion.

“Holy, holy, holy”

[**Confession**] [22] All this is just overwhelming for Isaiah! (vv 4–5).
And we can only imagine!

When Isaiah sees God

When Isaiah sees the angels in his vision,
he recognizes that he himself is not holy, but “a man of unclean lips.”
He constantly lives among people in the same condition.

“Unclean” points out that Isaiah cannot fulfill the demands of God’s Law and is
“Unclean” in the ritualistic sense of ancient Israel.

A man of unclean lips cannot stand before God.

[23] The only appropriate response is ***“Woe is me! For I am lost.”***

The only appropriate response is ***“Woe is me!”***

“I a poor miserable sinner confess all my sins...”

The people of the Old Testament knew this well,
marveling whenever one of them saw God and lived.

[24] Jacob wrestled with a man and later said, ***“I have seen God face to face, and yet my life has been delivered”*** (Gen 32:30).

[25] Samson’s parents were terrified when they realized they had seen God
(Judges 13:22)

[26] Moses talked with God and when he came down the mountain the
second time, with the second tablets in his hands, his face glowed (Ex 34)

[27] Then Job replied to the LORD: ***“I know that you can do all things; no plan of yours can be thwarted. ... My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you.”*** (Job 42:1-2, 5)

[28] Even the seraphim cover their eyes before God. So Isaiah’s response is
appropriate and correct.

[29] And Isaiah cries out, ***“Woe is me!”***

[Absolution] [30] What to do? The sinner is surely undone!

[31] Then an angel brings a burning coal from the altar and places it on Isaiah's lips.

The altar is the place where sacrifices for sin were made.

So the angel declares,

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

The sacrifices made for sin on the altar are applied to Isaiah personally.

Fire purifies!

[32] You know...

Both fire and water can be used for good or for ill, to keep alive or to kill.

We need fire to heat our homes, to cook our food, and to run our cars.

And yet fire out of control kills.

Similarly, we need water to stay alive;

we humans can live only three or four days without water.

But too much water in a flood kills and drowns.

God uses both fire and water to kill and to make alive.

In Baptism, God drowns the old man, killing our sinful nature.

At the same time, through the same water, he makes alive our new man,
giving us a righteous nature.

[33] In calling Isaiah to be his prophet, God uses fire to purify...

with the fire, the burning coal,

God killed and destroyed the uncleanness in Isaiah (Is 6:6–7),

at the same time making alive the redeemed person,

making alive the man whose sins were atoned for.

This Isaiah vision is a model of Confession and Absolution.

[34] In the same way as Isaiah exclaimed “Woe is me,”

we confess our sins at the beginning of the Divine Service,

for we deserve God's punishment and not the chance to stand before him.

AND In the same way as the angel applied God's forgiveness to Isaiah,

the pastor absolves the sinner,

delivering to each sinner God's forgiveness

won by Jesus Christ through his sacrificial suffering

and death on the cross :

“I forgive you all your sins

in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”

[35] After Confession and Absolution,
the congregation is prepared to come before God.
Because each person bears the righteousness, the holiness of Christ,
he or she now can stand comfortably before the Holy Trinity
And that, ultimately, is why we *do* care about this story.
The One True God Is Holy, Holy, Holy . . . *and* He Makes Us Holy!

[*Result*]

[36] Now forgiven, Isaiah hears God speaking,
“Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?”

[37] He receives the call and answers, “Here am I! Send me.”
Isaiah can now represent God to the Israelite people as a prophet.
It’s important to note that God took the initiative in asking Isaiah.
God called and Isaiah answered.
Here you are being equipped to go and make disciples for Jesus.
Christ says, “Go into all the world and preach the Gospel.”
[38] And you respond, “Here I am!”

[39] We believe in a triune God who comes to us, calls us,
But having God’s call
did not make Isaiah’s work easy.
And it doesn’t make your work easy.
The Lord would warn how hard the hearts of his people would be.
That is indeed what happened. Isaiah’s message was largely ignored.
Yet he persevered almost sixty years, delivering God’s message for him.

God called Isaiah to share His word.
And God continues to call you ...
He calls you to share His word.
Isaiah’s call, your call, that is an amazing story
And one we deeply care about. Amen!

So we... Declare his glory among the nations,
his marvelous deeds among the people. AMEN! (Psalm 96:3)
