Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Warning to a Nation in Crisis, Part 2
Scripture: Isaiah 6
Code: 90-163

I want you to open your Bible now to Isaiah chapter 6. In the time remaining in our service tonight, we wanna go back to this great portion of Scripture, which we began this morning. For those of you who might not have been here this morning, we'll have to do just a very brief review. We started in chapter 5 of Isaiah's prophecy, and we started with the parable that opens that chapter, a parable of judgment. Through that parable, the Lord pronounces judgment on Israel, because they have turned their back on Him. Then we went from the parable in verses 1 to 7 to the penetration in verses 8 to 23, where God indicts Israel for specific sins. And we identified those sins as grasping materialism, drunken pleasure seeking, defiant sinfulness, moral perversion, arrogant conceit, and down in verses 22 and 23, corrupt leadership.

It was because of those kinds of iniquities dominating the life of Israel that they had manifested their indifference toward God and their disobedience toward His law. In response to their iniquity, and in response to this indictment comes the punishment, which began in verse 24. So it goes from the parable, which is a funeral dirge, a funeral song; to the penetration, which is the specific indictment; to the punishment described in verses 24 to 30. Most notably, at the end of verse 24, this punishment comes for they have rejected the law of the Lord of hosts and despise the Word of the Holy One of Israel. This is Israel, the people of God, who have turned their back on Him and rejected His Word.

And we drew a parallel to our own nation, to our own country. It's time, I think, for us to begin to sing the funeral song...for our own nation, because we are guilty of the very same sins. Grasping materialism, drunken pleasure seeking, defiant sinfulness, moral perversion, arrogant conceit, and corrupt leadership mark our own nation. They are as thoroughly endemic and systemic in the life of America as ever they could've been in the life of Israel. And we, too, have had immense spiritual privilege, though we are not a covenant people, though we have not been given our land, as it were, by divine covenant and divine mandate. We have, nonetheless, had great foundations built on the Christian faith from which we have turned. We had in the early years of this nation a commitment to the Word of God. We have abandoned that with alacrity, with eagerness. We want nothing to do with God. We don't want Him intruding into our lives. And we, therefore, as Israel of old, stand under God's punishment.

That punishment works itself out in the terms of Romans chapter 1. It's not yet eschatological punishment as described in the book of Revelation from chapter 6 to 19 where you have the wholesale judgments that fall upon the earth in the time of the tribulation. It's not the eternal judgment

of hell that weights the unregenerate. It's not even largely cataclysmic judgment where God, as He destroyed the world by flood or as He destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah or the city of Chorazin, in some way moves in in a holocaust of death. But it is the judgment of abandonment where God gives a people over to sexual sin, Romans 1:24, to homosexual sin, Romans 1:26, and to a reprobate mind, Romans 1:28. And that's where I see our nation today.

And we ended this morning by saying there are folks going around saying America's on the brink of a great moving of God. I could wish that that were the case, but all of the signs would indicate to me that we are not on the brink of anything, but rather have entered into the judgment of God. God is right now judging this nation, having turned it over to sexual sin, which dominates our society; to homosexual sin, which is gaining an even stronger foothold, and sinks us even deeper into degradation; and, finally, to a reprobate mind, where the people who are supposed to be able to sort out our issues, that have discernment and wisdom, have minds that can no longer grasp the truth of God. We are under the judgment as described in Romans chapter 1 for our rejection of the truth.

Now, at the end of chapter 5, we then posed a question that leads us into chapter 6 of Isaiah's prophecy, and the question is what kind of person is God looking for at a time like this. This is a crisis time. We have a corrupt nation. We have, in large measure, an apostate Christianity, and, as well, we even have a confused and distracted evangelicalism. What kind of person is God looking for in a time of such immense crisis. And if there is a remedy, and there is, it's going to come to us in an understanding of chapter 6.

Chapter 6 opens, as we continue our little outline. We've seen the parable of the Lord, the penetration of the Lord, the punishment of the Lord, and now we come to the presence of the Lord. Chapter 6. "In the year of King Uzziah's death I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple. Seraphim stood above Him, each having six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called out to another and said, 'Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory.' And the foundations of the thresholds trembled at the voice of him who called out, while the temple was filling with smoke."

There is a great measure of despair, obviously, in the heart of the Prophet Isaiah as he comes to the end of chapter 5. He is just, by virtue of the inspiration of God, had to pronounce judgment on his people. That leaves him with a lot of questions. Question about God's promises and God's faithfulness and the fulfillment of God's covenants. And there is a large measure of concern. There is, in fact, a profound concern on the part of Isaiah the prophet as to what this all means in the light of God's unconditional and everlasting promise, for example, to Abra...Abraham, as well as to David.

And so I believe in the throes of the terrible trauma and this deep despair, Isaiah goes to the one place where he hopes he can sort out the reality of what is going on. He goes before God. It

indicates to us in verse 4 that he was in the temple, which was shaking at the presence of God. Likely, the prophet took off for the temple after he'd received this prophecy. He wanted to fall before God and try to understand what was going on. He have been a little bit like the proc...Prophet Habakkuk who was praying for revival and praying repeatedly for revival and that God would answer his prayer and restore his people and renew them and bring them back and make them obedient. And, instead, God said, "I'll answer your prayer by destroying them at the hands of the Babylonians."

And that even made it more difficult for the Prophet Habakkuk. He couldn't understand why God didn't restore them and revive them. Even less could he understand why God would allow a worse nation to be their judge. So Isaiah was no doubt in the same throes of the same dilemma, trying to find God in the midst of this and understand what was happening. The year is indicated to us in verse 1, "In the year of King Uzziah's death," 740 B.C. And as I mentioned this morning, Uzziah had been king for 52 years. He was a king of great reputation. He was a king of great admiration. He had the respect of the people. He had brought...brought a strong position militarily, which gave them freedom from any invasions, because their enemies feared them. And so they had great peace in the midst of the potential cold war that was around them.

And they largely counted on the fact that, as long as Uzziah was on the throne, that was sort of like divine approval. As long as the...the king gave at least a measure of devotion to God, and as long as he was still there, all was well. But you can't count on human rulers at all. And Isaiah was about to have that confirmed, because Uzziah died.

And it's quite a story how he died. You can read it in 2 Chronicles 26 sometime. But here's how it happened. He was killed by God Himself. God executed him, struck him with a fatal illness, and he died. And that sent a lightning bolt through that nation that pierced even Isaiah. Because the last vestiges of divine approval had been eliminated by God Himself. Uzziah had sinned one too many times. Overstepped his bounds. Invaded places he had no right to go. And after 52 years being king, he was executed.

Second Chronicles 26:16 describes it with these words. "But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction, for he transgressed against the Lord his God and went into the temple to burn incense upon the altar." He thought that because he was the king, he had the right to do anything. And so he invaded the priestly office, and God struck him with leprosy, and he was isolated immediately until he died...And now the people became fearful about the future. Uzziah was dead. The powers of Assyria were looming on the northern border. The nation was corrupt to the core. They were on the brink of disaster, and it is at this moment that Isaiah rushes to seek the Lord. He can feel the hot breath of Tiglath-pileser, the Assyrian king. The people were in a...a sort of frenzy, not knowing what was imminently going to happen. And Isaiah goes the only place you can go. He goes to find God.

And if ever a vision of God was needed, it was needed at that moment. In a decadent day, in a nation hanging onto the trappings of an empty religion, in a nation on the brink of divine judgment, there's only one place to go, and that's to God, and that's where he went. He went to the temple. And it says in verse 1, "I saw the Lord sitting on a throne." That must have been comforting. Now, this is a vision. You say, "What's a vision?" I don't know. I never had one...

A vision is not a dream. It is not a fantasy. It is not imagination. It is reality outside space and time. It is spiritual reality made visible...when otherwise invisible. It is an experience in which God lets you into another dimension to see things you would otherwise never see. It is reality. And when Isaiah saw the Lord, he saw the Lord. And he saw the Lord sitting on throne. That must have been encouraging, because he might have thought that somebody else was in charge. That somehow God had slid off and put somebody else on that throne for a day or a week or a month or whatever. Because nothing was going according to plan. Israel was abandoning their God, and now their God was abandoning them, and how did that fit in with the unconditional promise of God to Abraham? And how did that fit into the unconditional promise of God to David? None of it made sense, and he might have thought that he would see an empty throne abdicated by God or a throne occupied by a usurper like Lucifer.

But the fact of the matter is, he saw the Lord, and He was on the throne, and that's good news. God is still in charge. He is still sovereign. He is still omnipotent. He is still ruling. Well, he might have thought that, "Well, God is on the throne, but maybe He slipped a few notches. Maybe He's not the great and glorious God that we thought Him to be. Maybe He's sort of a fallen God like fallen angels." But, no, because he saw Him sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, he hadn't slipped at all. The same God in the same place of exaltation, sovereign, majestic...and then he saw the train of His robe filling the temple. This would be the shikainaglory of God. The emanating glory of God. When God revealed Himself in Exodus 33, He revealed His attributes in light. He somehow transformed His attributes like justice, mercy, goodness, omnipotence, omniscience, omni-presence, grace, jus...judgment, whatever, wrath. He translated all of those into emanating, shining, brilliant, blazing, glorious light. And, here, Isaiah sees that.

So this tell us God has not abdicated His throne. He hasn't slipped a few notches, and He's exactly the same God He's always been. He is immutable, unchanging. That's all very, very critical. Same God, still sovereign, still ruling, still majestic, still lifted up, no change. So he sees the glorious God right where He ought to be. And there must have been in his heart a tremendous measure of comfort, because when everything starts to go wrong, you...you might question whether God is really still in charge...and he found Him still in charge...

And then verse 2 in this immense picture of the presence of the Lord. He sees seraphim above God, who's seated on the throne. "And each of these seraphim have six wings, with two he covered his

face." That speaks of reverence, because angels are created beings. Even angels cannot look on the fullness of the glory of God without being consumed. "With two, he covered his feet." That's humility. Angels are both reverent and humble...Covered his feet, because the place where the angels stood was holy. "And with two, he...in the Hebrew...hovered." Like a celestial helicopter...That speaks of service. Those wings were moving, ready to immediately go into action at the bidding of God.

The seraphim are described then as reverent, humble servants...of God. Isaiah immediately knew that his heavenly force was intact. They hadn't lost any of their respect for God. There wasn't any rebellion going on. They were still humble. They were reverent. And they were still awaiting the bidding of God and would move immediately upon that bidding. This is quite an incredible vision he's having.

And then something quite remarkable happens in verse 3. "And one of those seraphim"...and, by the way, if you study the seraphim in Scripture, they always appear to be guardians of the...of the holiness of God. And here, one of them calls out to another. This is sort of an antiphonal in the Hebrew, it seems as if they were calling back and forth in an antiphonal way. And they were saying, "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of hosts." And that is, by the way, the only attribute of God ever repeated three times. And I think it is repeated three times because it is that which is most definitive about God.

To be holy means to be separate...and when you say that God is holy, holy, holy, you are talking about His otherness, His...His separateness. His...His uniqueness or His transcendent glory. His perfection, His purity. That is to say He is utterly unlike we are...He is completely other than we are...

And so Isaiah, in this vision, is clearly shown that God is still sovereign. He is still majestic. He is still the same God He's always been, manifesting the same attributes, and He is still holy, holy, holy, that is, utterly separate from sinners and sin. Therefore, whatever He is doing is right...He is too holy to look upon iniquity. He is too pure to do anything...wicked or sinful. And this is what God wants Isaiah to understand. He is still the sovereign of the universe, and He is still absolutely holy.

So whatever He is doing, He's in charge of. Nobody has made Him a victim. What is happening in Israel is directly under His sovereign control...and it is the most perfect expression of His purity...And I say to you, beloved, this is the most foundational reality in all of life. Lemme put it to you simply. Your view of God is the foundation of your life...Your view of God determines how you think and how you live...And the absence of a clear understanding of the sovereignty of God or a clear understanding of the majesty of God or a clear understanding of the holiness of God is the reason, largely, for people living the way they live. If the understood who God really is, it would have a profound effect on their life.

Wherever you see shallowness, in or out of the church, wherever you see impotence, wherever you see weakness, wherever you see selfishness, wherever you see disobedience, wherever you see compromise, wherever you see pragmatism, wherever you see, if you will, grasping materialism, drunken pleasure seeking, defiant sinfulness, moral perversion, arrogant conceit, and corruption in the life of individuals, they have a low view of God. The most controlling foundational reality of your life is your view of God. That's why, when you pray, Jesus said, "Pray this way. Our Father who art in Heaven." What's the next line? "Hallowed by Thy name." That is absolutely foundational. The more clearly you understand how holy God is, the more you will fear God, and that is the beginning of wisdom.

No other attribute of God is repeated three times. Theologians, through the centuries, have called this the trihagion. Holy is the Father, Holy is the Son, Holy is the Spirit. A Trinitarian reference. And then it says, "The whole earth is full of His glory." In other words, the glory of God is touching everything. All that is happening, Isaiah, is happening within the plan and purpose of our all glorious and sovereign and holy God...

Boy, Isaiah needed that. He needed to understand that his God was on the throne, or he could've been cast into hopeless despair, because he cared deeply about his nation and about his people. He could've been greatly confused about the promises of God. He needed to know God was still on the throne. And he needed to know that God was holy, holy, holy, never making a mistake, never with an error in judgment...

He saw a vision of the awesome holiness of his sovereign God...and it had a devastating effect on his surroundings. Look at verse 4...After having said the whole earth is full of His glory, and what the angel meant by that is that the glory of God is so immense, it can't be measured...It then says, "And the foundations of the thresholds...those would be the...the beams and the pillars that held up the temple...trembled at the voice of him who called out...That would be the seraphim...while the temple was filling with smoke."

This is pretty frightening thing. The whole vision was like in a...like the eruption of a volcano. It just began to shake the entire building...and the awesome fearfulness of God is being manifest. It's reminiscent of...the shaking of Mount Sinai, when God came down to give the law and the fire and the smoke and the warning not to touch the mountain. The writer of Hebrews said, "Our God is a consuming fire." Nature becomes a better interpreter of the majesty of God than anything else. The whole earth shakes at His presence. This is an awesome and frightening vision. It's not a joyful, peaceful experience for Isaiah. It's a shattering and devastating one, as any exposure to the sovereign holiness of our great God would be.

And Isaiah had quite the appropriate reaction. Verse 5..."Then I said, 'Woe is me, for I am...in the Hebrew... disintegrating! I am midmethe...from the verb doom...I am lost. I am perishing. I am destroyed. I am wiped out. I am falling apart. I am going to pieces." Probably Isaiah was as good a man as existed in that land. Probably he was as righteous a man as there was, as faithful a man as there was. But when he had a vision of God, all he could do was pronounce a curse on himself...

He knew what the word woe meant. He had just used it six times in the prior chapter. He knew it meant a curse, condemnation, judgment, damnation, death. He said, "I'm cursed. I'm done. I'm wiped out." Why?...Verse 5, "Because I am a man...literally with a dirty mouth...And I live among a people with dirty mouths." It's a most interesting perspective, isn't it?

Somebody might say to him, you know, "You got a bad self-image, fellow...You really need to work on that. Don't you know you're the best guy in the country? Don't you know when you open your mouth, God talks? You're a prophet." But one glimpse of the holiness of God destroyed him...No matter how good he was on a relative human basis, no matter how successful he would be at doing what Paul said he never did, comparing himself with others. No matter how brighter he would shine than the riffraff of his society, when compared to the presence of holy God, he was filthy, and he knew it...

And so he says, "I'm...I'm finished. It's the end. It's over. I'm done."...And the presence of God had shattered this prophet. Why did he say, "I'm a man with a dirty mouth"? Well, couple of reasons. One, because the best thing that could be said about him was that he spoke for God. So he was saying, "At my very best, I'm...I'm the worst." His mouth was his trademark...and even that was rotten. So he was saying, "At my very best, I'm the worst."...

You know, it really does bother me that today, even among evangelicals, we've made God and Jesus non-threatening. We've created a benign God...who doesn't give His people holy fear...And it's obvious to me that we do not understand the holiness of God, because there is so little devastating sense of sinfulness in our consciences. We're so content with our iniquity. We're...we're so smugly self-pleased with our nominal Christianity...and what we really need is a vision of the holiness of our great God...It had a devastating effect on this man. Not unlike Ezekiel.

Chapter 1, he saw God, fell over like a dead man...very much like Peter, James, and John on the Mount of Transfiguration when Jesus pulled aside His human flesh and revealed the glory of God. They fell down as dead men. Very much like John the Apostle, who, seeing the first vision of Christ on Patmos, recorded in Revelation chapter 1, fell over as a dead man, and Christ had to touch him and pick him back up.

Any vision of the glory of our great and holy God should be devastating. At a time when the church is weak, a time when Christians are content with their sin, there needs to be an exaltation of the

greatness of our God. The most important thing that a preacher can do, that a teacher can do, that we, as believers can do, is exalt God. That's why we worship Him. That's why we praise Him. That's why worship and praise to God will always be the priority here.

We're concerned about seeker around here, but there's only one seeker we're really concerned about, and that's God who seeks true worshippers. We believe that where God is exalted, people understand His holiness and, thereby, understand their sinfulness, and that's just the kind of person God is looking for as we shall see.

You know, I have to say that it grieves me when I hear these people who say they went to Heaven and saw God...and they came back, and they blithely tell about this tall tale of fanciful imagination of traveling to Heaven and smelling the smells of Heaven. And one guy recently said he went there, and he wanted to announce to everybody there were no bathrooms there, and all of this kind of foolishness. People take their show on the road.

What Isaiah was saying here is simply this. Look at the end of verse 5. "Mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." And that's gotta be fatal, because, if I saw Him, He saw me. I saw holiness. He saw sin. I'm dead...I'll never survive this. Never...I won't live through this.

You study the Old Testament, and you see that the holiness of God terrifying people. Read in Leviticus 10 about Nadab and Abihu. Read about Uzzi, a well-meaning guy who just reached out and touched the Ark of the Covenant to keep it from falling off the cart, and God killed him on the spot for coming that close. Read about Job who, when he really saw God, repented in dust and ashes and feared that he wouldn't survive. Read about Manoah, the father of Sampson, who came home and said to his wife, "We're dead. Write the will. It's over." And she said, "Oh, this is fine. What happened?" She...he said, "I saw the Lord. We're dead. If I saw Him, He saw me." Read about Korahdafamand Abiram, who came too close, crossed the forbidden line, and the ground opened and swallowed them.

Even in the New Testament, you read about the woman who came and, when Jesus came to her, and she...near her, she grabbed the tassel. The text of Scripture says, "She looked up and realized who it was, and she was terrified." You read about Peter, who, trying to catch fish in Luke 5, and the Lord from the shore says, "Try the right side of the boat," and he did, and there were just so many fish. And what was Peter's immediate reaction? "Whoa, this is a big one, Lord. Wait'll I take this one on the road. This is a great miracle. People are gonna love to hear this."

That's not what he said. What he said is, "Depart from me, O Lord, for I'm a sinful man." He knew he was in visual contact with the Creator of the universe, and he was in a panic. "Go away....he's...for I'm a sinner." Always remember the disciples on the boat in the Sea of Galilee and it says they were afraid of the storm, and then Jesus stilled the storm, and it says, "They were exceedingly afraid."

Because what's more frightening than having a storm outside your boat is having Holy God in it...

This is the vision of God that is needed today. We don't need to minimize God and minimize Christ. We need to exalt God and exalt Christ, and people must see Them for who They are...We need this fresh vision of God. We don't need more programs and more gimmicks and more methods and more techniques and different structures...We need an awesome understanding of the greatness of our God. "Well," you say, "that's fine, but is this the end of Isaiah?"

Well, let's go through the presence of the Lord to the next point, number five in my little outline. The purification of the Lord...Isaiah thinks it's over, verse 5. He thinks it's over. "That's it. I'm damned. I'm done. I've seen God, and if I saw Him, He saw me, and He can't look on sin, and so I'm done. It's all over."...He was a man with a filthy mouth. His people were filthy mouthed. And he identifies them that way, because out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth what? Speaks...But then the most amazing thing happened. I think he probably was in a mode of just waiting for a crushing, devastating blow.

And verse 6 says this. "Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a burning coal in his hand, which he had taken from the altar with tongs. And he touched my mouth with it and said, 'Behold, this has touched your lips; and your iniquity is taken away and your sin is...literally in the Hebrew...atoned for.'" This isn't what he expected. This isn't what he expected at all...The altar, what was the altar for in the temple? The altar was the place of atonement, wasn't it? It was the place where the sacrifice taken and the atonement was made for sin. And in magnificent imagery, the seraphim in the vision flies to him, and for all he knows, the seraphim is coming as an executioner. And he comes with a burning coal in his hand that he's taken from off the altar, which is the very location of atonement. "And he touched my mouth with it."

Lemme tell you something. I can't imagine anything more painful than taking a red hot coal out of a fire and putting it on somebody's mouth...Immediately searing the flesh, burning it beyond feeling. But you know something? Repentance is always very painful. It's always very painful. It's a letting go. It's an admission of shameful thoughts and shameful behavior, and repentance is always something that hurts if it's real...And it burned. You don't just come skipping into the Kingdom...There's some real remorse, and some real pain, some real sorrow. It's a painful thing to come to grips with your sins. Painful to be under the conviction of the Holy Spirit. Painful to see yourself for what you really are. It's painful to think about judgment...And any man who stands in the presence of God must...if he really understands where he is, be overcome with a flood of unworthiness and uncleanness that just sweeps over him...And it's painful.

But if you're gonna be useful to God, you have to be purged. And so the angel took the coal and touched his lips, and he says, "Your iniquity's taken away, and your sin is atoned for." It was something that God did for him, not something he did. God just cleansed him. God just forgave his

sin, based upon sacrifice, and we know it was the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. So the purification came, and the question then comes again.

What kind of person is God looking for in a time of crisis? Somebody might say, "Well, God is looking for bright and clever and energetic and entrepreneurial and gifted people who are great communicators and great idea people and well educated, etc., etc." No. What God is really looking for is people who have a vision of Him, and who understand His greatness and His sovereignty and His holiness, and who are broken under that. To whom does the Lord look?" Isaiah 66 says, "To him who is of a broken and a contrite spirit, and who trembles at My Word." One who is in holy awe of God...

There are a lot of people parading around saying they represent God, but they're very proud, and they're very self-centered, and they do everything they can to draw your attention to them, and they betray the bankruptcy of their own spiritual experience where they've not been broken. They've not fallen beneath the crushing weight of their own sin with a true vision of God, and said with Isaiah, "I'm ruined. I'm done." And maybe they've never even experienced the true forgiveness of a genuine salvation.

God is looking for people who understand Him, who are broken before His great holiness, and who, in repentant sorrow, have been purged from their sins...Somebody might say, "Well, you mean, how can God use a broken and a contrite pers...How can God use somebody who doesn't think he's anything but worthless? How can God use somebody who thinks he's got a dirty mouth? Huh?" That's just the kind of person God is able to use.

And that leads us to the last point, the proclamation of the Lord. And look what happens, verse 8. God, for the first time, speaks in the chapter here. Hasn't spoken yet. He speaks now. No more angels...this is God, so we call it the proclamation of the Lord..."Then I heard the voice of the Lord, saying...this is the first time in the vision God has said anything, and here's what God said...'Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?'"

"Send where? Go to do what? You just gave me a message of damnation. You just gave me a message of doom. You just told me that great armies were coming. You were gonna whistle, and they were gonna come, and they were gonna be powerful and effective, and they were gonna destroy Israel, and they were gonna trample Jerusalem. And this was Your judgment, and there was no turning back, and it was going to happen. What do You mean...whom shall I send and who will go for us? What do you want us to do?"

Well...in the midst of judgment, there was still a work of God to be done. There were still people to be reached. It wasn't the end of preaching the message of repentance. It wasn't the end of warning people. It wasn't the end of calling them to God and to abandon their sin. God still needed

somebody who would go to this nation on the brink, just as he does today. And it's not the great and the mighty. It's the broken and the contrite who understand God, who understand who He is, who have stood before His holiness and understand their worthlessness. Those who've been cleansed of their sin...and so verse 8 comes the response of Isaiah. "Then I said, 'Here am I. Send me.'"

And through the years, you've probably heard people preach on that, and sometimes you hear people say, "Well, Isaiah said, 'Here am I, Lord, send me," like it was some triumphant statement. I, frankly, think He probably looked around and didn't see anybody else. It was a private vision. You know, what do you mean, Lord? There's nobody here but me. And he probably said with a tremendous amount of fear, "Here am I. Send me."...I mean, after all, he was a dirty-mouthed prophet coming out of a group of dirty-mouthed people whose heart was bare and open before God. He needed painful purging. But in his brokenness, he said...probably like this in the Hebrew, "I'm here. You could send me."

In verse 9, God said, "Go...and tell this people. You're just what I'm looking for." Isn't that amazing? Isn't that amazing? "Just what I'm looking for. You go." And, again, somebody's gonna say, "Well, well, I mean this guy has just confessed his unworthiness. This guy has just admitted that he's wretched and deserves to be destroyed. This guy's just been unmasked."...He's just been cleansed, too. And the Lord uses people who are broken over their own sin, repentant, and purged.

Now, he's made himself available...and he's gonna go preach a message of deliverance to those who will repent. But I want you to listen to the rest of the commission. It's pretty frightening stuff. Verse 9...and, by the way, this section is quoted in the four Gospels, again in Acts, and again in Romans. Here's what God said to him. "Go, and tell this people: Keep on listening, but do not perceive; keep on looking, but do not understand."' What? "Yeah...he says...Isaiah, this is your commission. Now you're in the ministry. You go, and the people will not know what you're talking about. You go, and they will not understand."

Furthermore, verse 10 says, "Their hearts will be insensitive or calloused...their ears will be dull, their eyes will be dim. They won't be able to see. They won't be able to hear. They won't be able to understand, and they will not return to Me, and they will not be converted." Now how is that for your commissioning message? Whoa!..."They have nothing to say, because they don't understand anything. Their hearts are insensitive. Their ears are dull. Their eyes are dim. They cannot hear. They cannot understand. They will not return, and they will not be healed. They will be judged. Judgment will come."

So He reiterates the message of judgment...and I think we have the same situation, in all honesty, today...We have all these young men coming to the Master's Seminary. We have to say to them, "Look...we're not here to tell you that when you graduate from this seminary and go out and start to preach the Gospel across this nation or any other nation of the world that that whole nation is gonna

turn like Nineveh did under the preaching of Jonah. That you're gonna be the leader of...of...of...of the next great awaking like George Whitfield and Jonathan Edwards. There's no indication that that's in the future of this nation, because this nation already gives all evidences of being under the judgment of God. And we have to say to you what God said to Isaiah: Most people aren't gonna listen. Most people aren't gonna understand. They will not embrace what you say, because their ears are dull. Their eyes are dim...Their hearts are hard."

And so the message of judgment is reiterated. Now, if I was Isaiah I'd have said the same thing he said...verse 11. He said this: "Lord, how long?" That's a good question, isn't it? "You want me to that. How long you want me to do that? Just go out there and beat my head on a rock. How long you want me to go tell people who don't wanna listen? How long, Lord? Like, you know, a couple of weeks maybe? Maybe a month."

He answered, "No, you do it until cities are devastated and without inhabitant, houses are without people, and the land is utterly desolate. You keep doing it until there's nobody left to do it to. Just keep doing it. Just keep proclaiming repentance and forgiveness and hope for those who will turn from their sin and turn to God. You keep doing it...verse 12 says...until the Lord has removed men far away. Keep doing it until everybody's gone, until they've all been deported and the forsaken places are many in the midst of the land. Keep doing it until the place is a wasteland."...Why?

We shouldn't be shocked at most people in a godless, decadent society don't respond. That's expected. You say, "Well, why do we do it?" Verse 13...and here is one of the most difficult verses to translate in the whole of the Hebrew Old Testament. It's not particularly difficult to understand, but to get the right translation is very, very difficult. So when you read it in various versions of Scripture, they...they translate it all kinds of different ways. But lemme read it to you in the NAS, and then just simply explain it.

"Yet there will be a tenth portion in it. There will be a tenth portion in it." And if I were to add a last point to our little outline, following the proclamation of the Lord, we could call this last verse the promise. What is He saying? "There will be a tenth." That is the doctrine of the remnant. That is the doctrine of the remnant..."There will be a tenth. There will be some who respond. The majority won't...and it will be subject to burning like a terebinth or an oak. But when the oak is burned and the terebinth is burned, there is a stump. There...there...there's the stump that remains after that tree is felled. It's burned and then it's chopped down and there the stump is. And the holy seed is its stump."

What He is saying is God does have His people. There is a remnant. There is a holy seed. I love that...And out of that holy seed, God will raise up a people. There will be a believing remnant. Beloved, that's what we're here to do, in the midst of a crisis time in our own nation, facing further judgment by God. We're to go out, first of all, get a vision of God that shakes us to the very core of

our being. Come to grips with our sin. Fall before God. Allow Him in grace to cleanse us, our sins having been atoned for by Jesus Christ. And out of that cleansing comes our usefulness, and we go, and we preach, and we speak, and we give the Gospel, though the vast majority will not hear. There is a holy seed. And God has ordained that they will come to the knowledge of the truth, through the faithful witness of God's faithful servants.

What is Isaiah saying to us? There was a great beginning in Israel, and it all went bad. The land is corrupt. The religion apostate and weak. They are a people facing severe judgment. But in the midst of it all, the righteous may have an audience with God...and a subsequent purification, and then go out to proclaim the message of hope. And, for us, the message of hope in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We are not fatalists. Some will believe when they hear. And how shall they hear what? Without a preacher. This is our calling.

Father, we thank You for our service tonight. What a glorious evening it has been, from the opening song through the testimonies, the music, right down to this powerful word from the great prophet himself. Confirm it to our hearts, and may we live its truths. Use us, Lord, but, first, bruise us with the reality of who You are. And may we fall before You with a broken and a contrite heart and be purged by Your sweet grace through the atoning sacrifice and provision of Jesus Christ. And then be lifted up and sent out to reach that holy seed, that remnant chosen before the foundation of the world to hear and believe. Use this great congregation mightily in that enterprise. For Your glory in Christ's name. Amen.

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