



HIGHLIGHTS FROM ISAIAH

PART 1

ISAIAH

The Holiness of God - Isaiah 6

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

(Leaders, please use these questions **as a guide for discussion**. Please don't feel like you have to go through every one!)

Connect: How might trusting in the Branch change the way you respond when life feels uncertain?

Warm-Up

1. When you think about God, what's the first image or word that comes to mind and why?
2. People often say, "My God wouldn't do that..." or "I like to think of God as..." why do you think we sometimes try to make God fit our own ideas?

Read Isaiah 6:1-7

3. What does Isaiah see in his vision (v.1)? How does this picture of God compare to the way people often think of Him today?
4. Why is it significant that Isaiah's vision happens "in the year King Uzziah died"? What might that say about who really rules?
5. The seraphim cry, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty." What does it mean to be holy?
6. What does repeating the word "holy" three times communicate about God's character?
7. How would you describe the difference between God's holiness and our own human nature?
8. How does Isaiah respond when he sees God's holiness (v.5)? Why is this the only right response?
9. What does the burning coal from the altar represent? How does it point forward to Jesus?
10. How does knowing that your "guilt is taken away" affect your confidence in approaching God today?
11. What are the risks that come with having a domesticated or small view of God? How does Isaiah 6 expand our understanding of God?

Read Isaiah 6:8-13

12. God sends Isaiah to a people who will not listen. Why would God give him such a difficult mission?
13. How might this encourage us when we share about Jesus but people don't seem interested or respond negatively?
14. What do you think is meant by "*the holy seed is its stump*"? How does this image of new life after destruction point to Jesus and the hope we have in Him?
15. What does this chapter show us about God's love, holiness, justice, and mercy all working together?

Apply: How can we live differently this week because God is *holy, holy, holy* and yet merciful to us in Jesus?

PRAY: *Heavenly Father, we praise and worship you because you are a holy God, almighty, and sovereign. We thank you that even though we have been stained by sin and unholiness, you have made a way for us to approach you through your son Jesus. Keep us from having a small view of you and your grace but constantly expand our vision of who you are as we read your word and worship you. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

TITLE: ISAIAH - The Holiness of God

LOCATION: St John's Wishart 9AM

BI: God is an awesome Holy God, who will send Isaiah to preach to an unholy and stubborn people who won't hear, but he will be merciful.

STRUCTURE:

- The Holy God - 1-7
- A Surprising Mission - 8-13
- A Glimmer of Hope - 13b

- How big is your view of God?
- Just how big OR small is your view of God?
- I think it may be tempting for us in western Christianity to reduce God down.
 - That he's there! But only really when we need him...He's willing to hear our prayer...but maybe he's not able to do stuff about it.
- We can also domesticate God
 - That he's just lovely, floating on the clouds, not really caring what we get up to, as long as we're generally good people...
- And then this in turn impacts the way that we view ourselves!
 - A small domesticated view of God, generally leads to an ignorance of him, and then not really caring about our own lifestyle.
 - It can reduce our view of sin - that it is just a bit of a 'whoopsy' and that's that. That God doesn't care about it
- But Isaiah 6 completely blows these things out of the water.
- Today, we are going to get a glimpse into the very throne room of God. We'll see a picture of God and see the Holiness of God. And then his word to his unholy people.
- And ultimately, we'll see the mercy of God for his people and for us - in providing grace and mercy in his son Jesus.

- But before we get into it - let's just reorientate ourselves:
- In Chapters 1-5 - we saw that God's people Israel had completely rejected him, which will lead to God judging his people.
- In Chapter 3 - we specifically saw that God will take away all that Israel held dear
- In chapter 5 - Israel is described as an unfruitful vineyard - whose vines are going to be trampled, and walls taken down.
 - BUT these verses of judgement were not without glimmers of hope. We saw in Week 1 that God offers forgiveness and cleansing, and in week 2 we saw that God will provide the Branch - and that all who cling onto him, will have life in abundance.
- But it's only until chapter 6 that we are introduced to Isaiah!
- Why is that?
- Well it's almost like Isaiah needed to get the urgent stuff out up front.
- The spiritual state of Israel was rubbish! Their rejection of YHW was shameful - and that's why they needed to hear that first up!
- And now in Isaiah 6 - we see Isaiah being set apart and commissioned for this task.

- **The Holy God**
- 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."
- King Uzziah died probably around 740BC.
- He had a long reign, was pretty prosperous - but ultimately, he was full of pride and disregarded the Lord and was unfaithful to God. You can read about that all in 2Ch 26.
- And in the year of his death, the death of this king - Isaiah had a vision.

- Note the detail here - Isaiah isn't just a prophet, he's a historian! He wants people to know the historical certainty of what happened
- This wasn't a dream and this wasn't made up - this is what Isaiah saw.
- And in the year that the king died - he saw the Lord sitting on a throne.
- Essentially - as the earthly king was dying, Isaiah saw the heavenly King!
- The heavenly king who is unlike any other!
- He is magnificent and beyond comprehension.
- He is high and lifted up - not sitting in a throne room of a mere palace, but of the heavens itself!
 - Sitting On the throne that is above every other throne!
 - He has power and authority that is above and greater than any other thrones.
- And his complete authority even filled the temple.
- Imagine a robe that was so big - that its hem or train could fill this whole building?
- Imagine the scale of that robe and the scale of the person who was wearing said robe!
- Massive!
- We're getting a picture of a powerful, big, Kingly God who is above all another authorities!
- He's completely different.
- And there's even more to this picture:
 - V2 "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. And one called to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!"
- The Seraphim are only mentioned here in the bible!
- The name literally translates to burning ones. Blazing ones. Angelic blazing beings.
 - The fire represented cleansing, but also power and majesty
- But even these heavenly angelic beings can't look at God - two of their wings were covering their face - because God is too perfect and too massive to be able to look at.
 - The other two of their wings were covering their feet - as if declaring their intent to only Go wherever the Lord would send them:
 - And with the other two - the seraphim or angelic being flew.
- And they were singing and proclaiming and declaring to one another:
 - Holy Holy Holy is the Lord God of hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory!
- *In our culture - we tend to use superlatives a lot. Superlatives are an exaggerated expression of praise. Phrases like "this is the best coffee ever!" OR "it was the most awesome holiday ever" OR "He is the Greatest of all Time spin bowler - the GOAT!"*
- *OR "The biggest, the fastest, the greatest, the healthiest" in advertising...*
- *Everything gets hyped up to the max!! To the point where these phrases mean almost nothing these days!*
- Well in the Hebrew language [which Isaiah is writing in] - when you want to express totality or a superlative - you repeat the word.
- And that's what the seraphim are doing in this vision!
- They are declaring this:
- Not that God is just holy. Or holy holy. He is Holy Holy Holy!
- It's almost like God is holy to the power of three! Holy beyond comparison to anyone or anything else!
- Now Holy isn't a word that we generally use in everyday life. It's a pretty foreign concept particularly for those who aren't Christian. It's probably only used in conjunction with a swear word!
- But the holiness of God - is so crucial for us to know. It's almost the supreme truth about God!

- To be holy means to be separate or distinct. It also has the notion of perfection, purity, moral uprightness - that's all caught up in this one word - HOLY
- So not only is God in the position of all power and authority on his high and lifted up throne, he is also completely different, separate, and pure and perfect.
 - He is pure pure pure;
 - Perfect perfect perfect,
 - Distinct, distinct, distinct!
- God is not like us! He is completely different from us!
 - We live in a world stained by sin, we exist in a state of living in sin and wrestling with that mess and unholiness
 - God doesn't!
- He's far greater than us, and completely perfect.
- And the earth is where he spreads his goodness - all the earth is full of his glory.
- And the picture of the vision continues to be filled in:
- V4 "And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke."
- So here is this picture of our big, perfect, awesome, powerful, holy, holy holy, God. And his messengers singing so loudly, that you can feel it in your chest like the sound of roaring thunder overhead!
- How are you feeling? Imagine being there in this throne room - are you shaking in your boots a bit?
- Good!
- We must not domesticate God! Or trivialise God! Or in our heads think of God as being like us...
- One of the worst things that we can do in our view of God is to try make God in our own image.
 - You may have heard the phrase "I couldn't believe in a God who...."; Or "My God wouldn't do that" OR "Your God is a monster..."
- But for us - we don't get to define who God is. We don't get to decide who God is or what God does - he is God and we are not! He is perfect and powerful and we are not! He is the king above all kings and we are not!
- And he alone is holy holy holy and we are not.
- And in the presence of a holy God - we ought to shake in our boots a bit, and tremble a bit
- Just as Isaiah did V5 "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!"
- Isaiah recognises his sinfulness and the sinfulness of the people who he lives with!
- And he knows that since God is so Holy - nothing sinful can really be in his presence and live!
- So he knows that he is as good as a dead man!
- But God isn't just powerful and holy - he also shows mercy and grace: V6 "Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a burning coal that he had taken with tongs from the altar. And he touched my mouth and said: "Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for."
- The altar was the place where there was perpetual fire for burning sacrifices and offerings to God.
- These offerings of all types were done to represent God's anger against the sinner, and that sin being taken away.
- It's the place where sin was washed away, the punishment taken on behalf of the person, God's wrath against the sinner taken away.
- That's what atonement means. Sin taken away by a substitute offering.
- And so the angel takes a piece of live coal from this altar and touches Isaiah's lips, and declares him right with God.
- Guilt taken away - sin atoned for and done away with.

- But ultimately, the sacrifices of cows and goats couldn't actually take away sin...they were a pointer to something greater than themselves.
- Ultimately, these sacrifices were pointing to the once for all sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross where the sins of the whole world, including Isaiah's and ours was dealt with and atoned for.
- He substituted himself in to take our punishment and take away the sin - as a substitutionary atonement for us.
- And so as we think about approaching God, we can now do so not out of fear and being scared of God - but we can do so confidently, because our sins have been amazingly graciously, and kindly forgiven in Jesus!
- So that means that we will be able to live and exist in the presence of God...right now, by his Holy Spirit - and into eternity where we will see him face to face and live!
- All through Jesus.
- Our God is "Holy holy holy, merciful and mighty, perfect in power, in love and purity"

- **A Surprising Mission**
- And it's because God is who he is, that he sends Isaiah on a mission.
- But - it seems like a bit of a stitch up for Isaiah.
 - *Just imagine being in sales at a company.*
 - *And your manager sends you on a trip around Australia to try and sell your product...and you think Great! This is my moment in my career - earn some good commission, rack up the frequent flyer points..*
 - *But the manager tells you - oh by the way, no one is going to want to buy this stuff. And probably the more and more you push it - the more and more they won't want it...*
 - *You'd be second guessing whether it was worth it to go...*
 - *You'd be wondering what the point was!*
- But that's essentially what God tells Isaiah to do:
 - Go and preach about me to the people of Jerusalem and Judah, but people won't hear it, they'll harden their hearts, they won't understand - and this will keep on going until they get carted out of the land, and even the people who remain in the land will be brought to the ground.
- This seems a bit perplexing doesn't it? A bit contradictory?
 - In fact these verses are among some of most quoted in the new testament! Jesus even quoted these words.
- Why?
- Well there's a sense in which Israel have had their chance. Chance after chance after chance.
- And so - this is an act of judgement against them.
- If they harden their hearts against God, God will harden their hearts just as they wanted!
- Isaiah preaches about God and his mercy in very clear terms - but with little to no success.
- So much so - that exile will come and destruction of their home land as final judgement on them.
- V11 "Then I said, "How long, O Lord?" And he said: "Until cities lie waste without inhabitant, and houses without people, and the land is a desolate waste, and the LORD removes people far away, and the forsaken places are many in the midst of the land. And though a tenth remain in it, it will be burned again, like a terebinth or an oak, whose stump remains when it is felled." The holy seed is its stump."
- Judgement is around the corner for Israel, because they failed to be God's holy people. They failed to hear his words and worship him.
- They forgot how powerful and awesome their God was -YHW. Their view of God got smaller and smaller, so their worship and service of him became smaller and smaller!
- And so - off to babylon they will go. And for those who remain - it will be terrible.

- But as is always the case, wherever judgement is preached, there is always mercy available to God's people.
- I wonder if you noticed the very last words of V13?
- "The Holy Seed is its stump"?
- YHW isn't done with his people just yet.
- There is still life beyond judgement.
- God will still save a people for himself. People who will enjoy his promises. There will be a faithful remnant from the sinful nation of Israel!
- And he will save both them and us through the seed, the branch from the stump - through his Messiah!
- Through Jesus!
- Jesus is the true Israelite who fully obeyed God - even when tempted and tested.
- Jesus is the true Israelite who was perfectly Holy as his Father is Holy.
- Jesus is the true Israelite who was a light for the world to see - a light to lighten the nations
- And it's through Jesus that our sin and failure and unholiness can be taken away!

- How patient and merciful and loving is our God?
- Even though time after time we sin and miss the mark and don't live up to his ways - he still forgives us through Jesus!
- It doesn't matter what our history has been, it doesn't matter how far we have walked away, there is a way back to God!
- Sins can be atoned for through the stump! Through the Holy Seed - the Messiah!
- And if God was so patient with his people Israel - we can be confident of his patience and mercy with us...//

- I know my record of sin. Before God, without Jesus - I would have no hope of living! I'm no better than the Israelites!
- But I know that through his death and resurrection for me - that sin has been taken away. My record has been wiped completely clean. Atoned for.
- And I know that all God has called on us to do is confess our sins, acknowledge our wretchedness, turn away from them - and trust in Jesus Christ!
- So then we can have the confidence that we see in Hebrews 10:19-22 that we can waltz into God's presence - and live!
 - "Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water"
- And we are welcomed into his presence as a loving father welcomes their daughter or son...
- Welcomed into a relationship with him right now - and for eternity...
- Where we will see him in all his Power, Authority, And Holiness on that glorious day...and join in that song of the seraphim
 - Rev 4:8 "Holy Holy Holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!"