

Holy To The Lord!

Isaiah 6:1-8

October 6, 2024

Open your Bibles to Isaiah 6 where we will be talking about holiness. Speaking of which, did you hear about the nun who accidentally took her laxative with some holy water. It started a religious movement. Holiness is no joke. In fact, in many ways it is the opposite of humor as it is of utmost seriousness. That doesn't mean we can't laugh in God's presence for the Bible tells us that God Himself laughs. But ours must never be unholy laughter. Or disrespectful. For respect is the essence of Holiness. And indeed, there will be no truly godly movement without holiness.

Say Holy. This word is used many times in the Bible. It appears both in the second chapter, the last chapter and over 600 times in between. As such, it is one of the overarching themes of Scripture that we would do well to take note of. And so let's begin today by reading about it in Isa 6:1 In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple. 2 Above him were seraphs, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. 3 And they were calling to one another: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory." 4 At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke. 5 "Woe to me!" I cried. "I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty." 6 Then one of the seraphs flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. 7 With it he touched my mouth and said, "See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for." 8 Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" And I said, "Here am I. Send me!"

We looked at this passage earlier this year and emphasized the, "Here am I. Send Me" part. Today, we want to focus on the first part of this passage in which we get a glimpse of God. Isaiah and a few other prophets were privileged to do so and all of them agree on one incredible aspect: God's holiness. His magnificence. His purity. In this passage, we see how massive God is as the train of His robe fills the temple as the song just reminded us. Does God have fingernails? We are made in His image, so whether or not that means He has fingernails, I don't know, but if He does, there's no dirt under them! But even God's fingernail couldn't fit in this building. Nor in this county, nor in this solar system. And that's just His fingernail, not to mention the train of His robe! God's immense size, His overwhelming presence caused Isaiah to be totally undone, ruined. His knees turned to jelly, His heart to water, His eyes to fountains.

As Isaiah trembles in His Holy Presence, he sees and hears the angelic beings, the seraphs. Say seraph. Each of them had six wings and they constantly called out to each

other, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory." Their chorus highlighted three things that they kept repeating. 1. God's might. Say Almighty. 2. God's glory. Say glory. And 3. God's Holiness.

800 or so years later when John the Apostle entered the open door of heaven those seraphs were still singing the same song. Revelation 4:8 says, "Each of the four living creatures had six wings.... Day and night they never stop saying: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come." They're still singing that same song today! If the angels have been singing the same song for over 3000 years, I think it's OK for me to preach on it twice in six months. One song. One verse. One refrain. Like a broken record. But it never gets old. This morning in our music we echoed this heavenly chorus. If you're not keen on praising God, you need to work on that for you're going to be doing it forever in heaven. You won't be able not to.

Today we are privileged to get a glimpse of God through His holy Word. And as we do, we can't miss His holiness. The Hebrew word for Holy means consecrated, dedicated, sacred. It carries the idea of something set apart for special use. When I was growing up we had everyday clothes and we had Sunday clothes. You only wore your Sunday clothes to church. Or on picture day at school. Some of you may have special cologne or perfume. Good china. That's the idea of holiness. Set aside for a special purpose.

And one of the main reasons for God's holiness is not just His power and size, but His purity and total sinlessness. He is completely clean. Which is another meaning for this OT word. God is holy and He often refers to Himself as the **Holy** one of Israel. We also find in the OT that everything associated with God becomes holy. Like the Day He called the Holy Sabbath. Like the holy ground around the burning bush. Like the holy mountain and holy hill on which His holy temple was built. Like His holy angels, His holy nation, His holy Word, the Holy Scriptures, and His Holy Spirit. Take a minute or two to meditate on God's holiness.

So how are we unholy people to respond to a holy God? We should join the seraphs in worshipping Him for it. Ps 30:4 commands us to, "Sing to the Lord, you saints of his; praise his holy name." If you refuse to worship Him or choose other things instead of worshipping Him, you are disobeying Him. 1 Chron 16:29 tells us to, "...worship the Lord in the beauty of his holiness." His holiness is beautiful and the longer we gaze upon Him, the more beautiful He becomes! So as we consider His holiness, we should worship Him for it.

But we also learn another very important lesson about God's holiness. As we get closer to Him, our response will be very similar to Isaiah's. We too will say, "Woe is me, I am undone. I am ruined! I don't belong here!" We'll be convicted of our own sinfulness and utter unworthiness to near Him. Because we are unholy. We don't belong

anywhere close to the holy clean God because we are dirty and corrupt. Isaiah knew he was totally out of place with sinful lips and heart as he humbled himself before the holy God. After **their** unholy sin, Adam and Eve were banished from God's holy presence in the Garden. They could not reenter. For the next several thousand years, unholy human beings were kept at a distance from the holy God.

But because God wants a relationship with us He continued to show mercy and reach out. Even though we didn't belong in His Holy presence, His plan has always been to create and set aside a holy people whom He could be with. Before He gave the Ten Commandments, He told Israel, (Ex 19:5-6) "Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, 6 you will be for me **a kingdom of priests** and a **holy** nation." In Deut 14:2 Moses tells them, "for you are a people **holy** to the Lord your God. Out of all the peoples on the face of the earth, the Lord has chosen you to be his treasured possession." But that was too much for them. They just wanted to be plain and ordinary and unholy and let Moses and Aaron be holy in their place. How very sad.

Then the Tabernacle was built with several layers to insulate unholy people from the Holy God. The outer curtain with the courtyard. Then the Holy Place inside into which only the priests could go and then beyond that, behind the curtain, the Holy of Holies where God dwelt. But only the High Priest could enter that Most Holy Place and then only once each year, and then only with the blood of a sacrifice.

When Aaron's sons offered unholy fire, they were destroyed and in Lev 10:3 Moses said to Aaron, "This is what the Lord spoke of when he said: "Among those who approach me I will show myself holy; in the sight of all the people I will be honored." It was very clear not just anyone could come before God any time they wanted any way they wanted, for He is a holy God.

When Solomon built the temple, it too had fences to keep unholy people a safe distance from the holy God. There was an outer court for the Gentiles, an inner court for Jewish women, a court for Jewish men before you got inside the Temple to the Holy Place where the lampstands and the incense were and only priests could enter. But again, the Holy of Holies could only be entered once each year by the High Priest. At some point, they began to tie a rope around his leg to drag him out if God struck him dead inside. Because God is holy and even the High Priest was not. Ultimately, the Jews rejected God's holy laws and holy plans wanting instead to be like all the other nations worshipping idols and doing evil.

And so He offered His holiness to others. And this is the great turning point. For when Jesus came, He shed His blood to wash away our unholy sin and make us holy and enable us to be in God's presence. In Eph 5 we are told that "...Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her 26 to make her **holy**, cleansing her by the washing with water

through the word, 27 and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but **holy** and blameless.” You can’t get holy by yourself!

When He died, Jesus split the curtain opening the Most Holy Place to all willing to accept His invitation and enter. Heb 10:10 says, “... we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.” God’s plan for Israel to be His holy people has now been extended to the Gentiles. He even offers this high and Holy privilege to you. Eph 1:4 tells us that, “...He chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight.”

If you’re saved, say I’m holy. Praise God for this, Amen? What we were powerless to do, Jesus did for us! Not just opening the way into God’s presence but inviting us in! This is an unbelievable privilege that no one in any other religion in history has ever had. Only priests, kings, and queens could enter the holy presence of a god. But through Jesus, whosoever will may come. And so we come to the Lord’s Table today!

But let’s be careful not to misunderstand and somehow think that because of this, God is no longer as holy as He’s always been. God didn’t become less holy when Jesus opened the way for us. He didn’t become less holy when He invited us to His holy table. Jesus did open the way for us to enter, but we mustn’t go in like a bunch of drunken sailors and bumbling idiots. At least comb our hair. Button our shirts. Put our minds in soberness. Put our hearts in tune as we come to the Lord’s table! Imagine visiting the Oval Office while drunk, high, or preoccupied. Once while observing a case in the US Supreme Court, I was reading a pamphlet and one of their ushers took it from me. They didn’t let you sleep or read or anything else in the Court. Your attention was to be on the case or you were escorted out. Imagine if God would escort us out of worship or Communion every time our thoughts wandered and we looked at our phones. Our attention mentally, emotionally, and spiritually must be on God our Father and Christ our Brother through the Holy Spirit as we come to His table. For He is holy.

In old Israel, the High Priest was to wear a golden plate on His forehead that said, “Holy to the Lord,” reminding him and others of his holy, sacred calling from the Holy God. And so, if you are a believer today, here’s your sign. You and I are “holy to the Lord.” Special. Set apart. God-like. How would this affect your behavior if this was tattooed on your forehead? But we don’t want to be holy do we? We don’t want to be holier than thou. So we descend to the lowest common denominator. Instead of seeing how holy we can be for Jesus’ sake, we see how irreverent we can be for the world’s sake. For God’s sake no! Five times God tells us in His Word to, “Be holy, for I am holy!” 2 Tim 1:9 says He, “has saved us and called us to a holy life.” Here’s your sign!

In Col 3:12, Paul calls us, “God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved,” and then tells us to act like it by putting on holy clothes. It says, “Cloth yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.” These are the clothes that a holy one should wear. As we come before Him in worship and today to His table, may we be wearing the holy robes of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Eph 5:3-4 tells us, “But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for **God’s holy people**. 4 Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving.” These are our Sunday clothes, that should also be our everyday clothes. We are not to be holy just one day per week!

If we are holy, we ought to dress like it. Act like it. Think like it. Love like it. Forgive like it. Surf the web like it! Come just as you are, but realize as you come, to Whom you’re coming. We must be careful not to take His holy presence for granted, to enter in an unholy casual way. In I Cor 11, we find some in the early church coming to the Lord’s Table with drunk and impatient. In Verse 29, we’re told, “For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself.” The solution isn’t to stay away. It’s to get clean! To examine oneself. To confess, repent, and come humbly before Him. That’s why we always take some time for examination prior to Love Feast. 2 Cor 7:1 tells us to, “... purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, **perfecting holiness** out of reverence for God.” Motivated by our reverence for the holy, high, and hallowed God, we should purify ourselves that we might perfect holiness. Heb 12:14 tells us, “Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be **holy; without holiness** no one will see the Lord.” So yes, Jesus’ blood makes us holy. But the Scripture is clear that we too have a role to play in our own holiness.

Now believers have a special advantage here. Because of Jesus’ death and resurrection, the Holy God now actually lives within each and every true believer in the form of His Holy Spirit. And as we allow ourselves to be led and directed by Him, as we obey His leading and prompting, we will be holy even as God is holy, for the Holy God lives in us. We don’t have to drink holy water to start a holy movement. He does it in us! Holy Spirit, rain down! Make us holy!

Isa 57:15 helps us understand this paradox of how unholy creatures like ourselves can ever come into the presence of our Holy Creator. It says, “For this is what the high and lofty One says — he who lives forever, whose name is holy: “I live in a high and holy place, but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit...” So as we recognize our own unholiness, confess and repent of it, and humble ourselves before the Holy God, He grants forgiveness, bestows the holiness of Christ on us and welcomes us not only into His holy temple, but into the Most Holy Place around His holy table. What a high and holy privilege!

And so as we sit around His holy table today, may we do so with a spirit of reverence and holiness. Recognizing what a high and holy time it is but even more so recognizing the high and holy One at whose table we sit. Reverent in our eating, in our washing, in our communion and in our conversations. Let's thank God for the privilege of being His holy people.