

What is the purpose of our lives? I think it's important for us to explore this question from time to time. For God has a claim on our lives, and it would be a good thing to figure out what this means for our walk with him and with one another. This morning that's what we're going to talk about.

OPENING PRAYER

ISAIAH 6:1-8: 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. ² 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. ³ And one called to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory!" ⁴ And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke. ⁵ 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!" ⁶ Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a burning coal that he had taken with tongs from the altar. ⁷ And he touched my mouth and said: "Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for. ⁸ And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" Then I said, "Here am I! Send me."

Isaiah wrote, **Isaiah 6:1b-2, "...I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of His robe filled the temple.** ² **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."**

This is a picture of the Lord in His glory, coming with judgment on Israel. Indeed, God's awesome splendor overshadowed the nation's spiritual squalor and brokenness. The seraphim were angels of God on a mission to reconnect the people with the Lord before it was too late.

Incidentally, this is the only place in the Bible where seraphim appear. In the Hebrew, “**seraphim**” means “flaming ones.” They appeared as whirling flames of fire to Isaiah. This is a sign of purity and judgment in the Scripture.

Consider how the seraphim covered their eyes and their feet with their wings, but they did not cover their ears or mouths. The work of the seraphim was to listen to God and then to proclaim what He had said. They were messengers of God. However, they covered their eyes and their feet out of respect.

We read, **Isaiah 6:3-5**, “**...one (seraphim) called to another and said: “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory!”⁴ And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke.⁵ 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!”**

The seraphim lifted up words of adoration to the Lord, as all prayers should begin. One popular prayer tool is called A.C.T.S., which stands for Adoration-Confession-Thanksgiving-and Supplication. That’s a good outline for prayer, beginning with adoration.

We read in the passage that the seraphim recalled how the whole earth is “**full of (God’) glory,**” which is to say the Lord is the source of all life, of the air we breathe, and the food we eat. God is life. We read there was an earthquake. This was the earth’s affirmation of God’s presence, as we read elsewhere “**that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now (with the revelation of the Christ)**” (Romans 8:22).

When Isaiah said, “**Woe is me! For I am lost,**” he was confessing that he was a sinner, like those among whom he lived. He was expressing how, because of his sin, he knew that he had no right to stand before God. He was afraid. Isaiah’s humility before God set the stage for what the seraphim then did:

We read, **Isaiah 6:6-7**, “**...one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a burning coal that he had taken with tongs from the altar.⁷ And he touched my mouth and said: “Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for.”**

Isaiah saw the altar in God's temple in Jerusalem, where the sacrifice for the atonement of sins was consumed by fire. This was God's outward sign of His purification of the people. Isaiah's vision of the seraphim taking a burning coal from the altar was God taking the initiative to show Isaiah that He had forgiven him for his sins.

It was a gracious thing God did for Isaiah. God pursued Isaiah, and He blessed him.

But the Lord had a motive: We read, **Isaiah 6:8, "(Isaiah) heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" (And then he) said, "Here am I! Send me."**

After Isaiah's sins were forgiven, he was prepared to serve the Lord. I think it's no coincidence the Lord used the imagery of the burning coal touching Isaiah's mouth to signify how He was going to use Isaiah. That is, He was sending him forth as his prophet, his spokesman. Isaiah's job was to proclaim God's Word with his mouth.

So how did Isaiah respond? Did he say, "I'm not so sure I can do this, but I'll try?" I hear Yoda from Stars Wars, The Empire Strikes Back, saying, "Do. Or do not. There is no try!"

But that is how we are, isn't it, whining, "I'll try."

But Isaiah said, **"Here am I. Send me!"** The prophet was filled with unbridled enthusiasm and a willingness to do God's bidding.

So what does this mean for you and me? I think there are several things we can take away from Isaiah's calling from God. First, like Isaiah, God came to us first. We did not seek him before He laid claim on our lives and revealed Himself to us. Somehow He stepped into our lives, and then He shook things up. At some time in our lives we all have such an encounter with God. We have that ah-ha moment when we realize we are sinners and we need God's help if we are going to live, really live, and rest in God's peace and joy here in our lives today.

Second, like Isaiah, we were overwhelmed when we encountered the true God. For we saw that He is not like us, that He is holy, that He is worthy of our respect and that, indeed, we should worship Him on our knees. We realized that our lives are in His hands, and He can and He will do with us as He pleases. But not everyone responds in the same way to this awesome God. Some people submit to Him, but others do not.

Third, and this is why we should submit to God, like Isaiah: When we bow down before Him, we are forgiven for our sins, and he heals us in our hearts, and he gives our lives purpose. Isaiah's purpose was to be a prophet of God to Israel. So too God has given our lives purpose.

Which brings us to our last point: Like Isaiah we've been empowered by God; our lives are purposeful. The Lord forgave our sins, He gave us His Spirit, He feeds us at His altar, and He speaks to us through His Holy Bible. In a word, God has equipped us to be servants in His kingdom.

Friends in Christ, God has performed a miracle in each of our lives. He has made us worthy to stand in His presence and to call Him, Father. When He looks down upon us, He sees His sons and daughters. He knows each one of us by name, and He holds us in His hand as He grooms us to walk with Him in faith, following Jesus. Whatever our job is, wherever we live, our purpose is shaped by our walk with Jesus.

Brothers and sisters, God loves you in His heart. And He's entrusted you with His Spirit. As I reflect on how God sees us—a people gathered together in His name, in His presence worshipping Him—I hear Him asking us the same question He asked Isaiah: **“Whom shall I send, who will go for us?”**

And I hear us responding in the same way Isaiah did: **“Here am I. Send me!”**
Would you say it with me? (“Here am I. Send me!”)

When I say these words I experience several different things in my heart. First, I feel loved by God, for He has chosen me as His son. I am not alone.

“Here am I. Send me!”

When I say these words I remember that the Lord has graciously given me a path to follow. I have direction. I have purpose. My life has meaning, and I feel that my life has value before God.

“Here am I. Send me!”

When I say these words a feeling of confidence wells up inside of me to do those things which God has given me to do, making His lordship in my life self-evident.

This week, brothers and sisters, may you be encouraged to know that God has come to you and He loves you, that all of your sins have been washed away, and you stand before Him as His son, His daughter.

This week, may you be strengthened in your heart and mind, filled with confidence, knowing that before God your life has meaning, your life is valued, your life is treasured by God, for He called you for a purpose.

And this week may you have the opportunity to share this Good News with another person who really needs to hear it, in the name of Jesus. Amen.