

What is the purpose of your life? When we were younger we may have thought a lot about that question. We were idealists and our heads were filled with all kinds of fantasies. But then we grew up, and we became much more practical, focused mostly on making a living and raising a family.

But I think it's important for us to explore this question from time to time. For God has a claim on our lives and He has called each one of us with a purpose in mind. That's what we're going to talk about this morning, reflecting on the call of the prophet Isaiah from the Old Testament, and what that might have to do with us.

PRAYER

READ 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."

Again, we heard Isaiah say, **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 all of His glory; it's a picture of God coming with judgment for Israel. Indeed, His awesome splendor overshadows the nation's spiritual squalor and brokenness. The seraphim, special angels of God, are hard at work striving to reconnect the people with the Lord, beginning with this vision to Isaiah.

Incidentally, this is the only place in the Bible where seraphim appear. Seraphim means “flaming ones.” Perhaps they appeared as whirling flames of fire, a sign of purity and judgment in the Scripture. The seraphim stood before God like servants prepared to wait on their master.

Notice how they 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. Just like angels, they were messengers of God. However, they covered their eyes and feet out of respect.

We read in **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 commonly used prayer tool is called A.C.T.S., which stands for Adoration-Confession-Thanks-Supplication. That’s a good outline for prayer.

We read in the passage about how the seraphim recalled how the whole earth is “full of (God’) glory. This is the life of God. It permeates all things, for without God there’s nothing, not even the water, dirt, and rock on which everything else is built. And we read about how 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**” (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 and live. Isaiah’s humility before God set the stage for what the seraphim then did:

We read in **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."**

In his vision, Isaiah saw the altar at the 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 himself taking the initiative to show Isaiah that He had forgiven him for his sins.

It was a gracious thing God did for Isaiah, for he didn't ask for this gracious act from God. Rather, God pursued Isaiah, and He blessed him.

But God had a motive: We read in **Isaiah 6:8**, **“(Isaiah) 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.”**”

After God forgave Isaiah for his sins, 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 went to send him forth as his prophet, his spokesman. His job was to proclaim God's Word with his mouth.

So how did Isaiah respond? “Sorry, I'm busy. Maybe you can find someone else.” No. Did he say, “This is not in my job description.” No. Rather, Isaiah said, **“Here am I. Send me!”** He was filled with unbridled enthusiasm and a willingness to do God's bidding.

But what does this mean for you and me? I think there are several things we can glean 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.

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 respect and awe, and that we should worship Him on our knees. Indeed, we realized that our lives are in His hands, and He can and He will do with us as He pleases. 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. But that's not all. God also heals us from the inside out for a purpose. Isaiah's purpose was to be a prophet of God to Israel. So too He's given our lives purpose.

Which brings us to the 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 serve 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 call Him, Father. And as He looks down upon us, He sees His sons and daughters. He knows each one of us by name, and He holds you in His hand and He grooms you to walk with Him in faith, following Jesus. That's our purpose. Whatever our job is, wherever we live, our purpose is to walk with Jesus.

Brothers and sisters, God loves you. He really, really 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 spirit and heart. First, I feel loved by God, for He has chosen me as His son. I'm not alone.

Would you say it with me? **“Here am I. Send me!”** (“Here am I. Send me!”)

When I say these words I realize the Lord has 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.

Say it with me, **“Here am I. Send me!”** (“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.

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 may you have the courage and opportunity to share this same good news with another person who really needs to hear it, in the name of Jesus.