

HUMILITY'S RESPONSE TO SEEING GOD

INTRODUCTION: What are good attitudes to have in a new year...and a new presidency...and all year long?

First, a desire...a resolve...a **hunger...to hear what God says** more than what man says.

Ps 85:8 "I will hear what God the Lord will speak: for He will speak peace unto His people..."

Second, a **hope that is in God**—not in men and especially not in ourselves.

Ps 42:5 "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God..."

Third, the attitude of **humility**. **1 Peter 5:5** reminds us we are to "be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble."

We can have God's **assistance** if we are humble; but will have His **resistance** when we are proud.

But how do you **define** humility? What does it **look like**? As mentioned before, humility is a **thread** that is interwoven throughout the fabric of Scripture. And because there is not just one **book**...or one **passage**...or one **illustration** that teaches the blessing of humility—and the sin of pride—I have been trying to break it down into smaller "slices" so we can look at it a little more closely.

First, we noted humility's view of **sin**.

--Humility is seen in **sorrow over sin**—not joy in it.

--Humility recognizes that sin **hinders the blessing of God**.

--Humility agrees with God that sin must be **forsaken**—not hung onto!

--And humility desires that sin be **pointed out**. Instead of becoming **defensive**, the cry of the humble is that of David in **Psalms 139:23-24** "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

Two weeks ago, we looked at humility's view of **self**.

We noted from the parable of the **prodigal son**—and the **Pharisee and publican** that went to the temple to pray—that the humble person sees themselves as **unworthy of the forgiveness and mercy of God**.

We saw in the prayer of Solomon that the humble person sees himself as **unwise**—and needing wisdom from God.

And we saw in the example of King Jehoshaphat—and the Apostle Paul—that the humble person acknowledges **they are unpowerful** to handle the tasks & trials that God sends their way & that they need God

This morning I want to look at a third aspect of humility and it is this: *How the humble person responds when they see God*. There is probably no clearer picture of a humble person's response to God than that of the prophet Isaiah in Isaiah 6:1-5.

Notice again verse 1: "In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne..." The thrust of the verse—and really the first 5 verses of the chapter—is Isaiah's vision. What is easy to overlook, though, is the importance of **the timing** of Isaiah's vision. God **gives us** the timing, though, and because He does, there is obviously some significance as to **when** it happened.

1. The context of the vision (What was going on?)

When did Isaiah have this vision? "In the year that king Uzziah died..." **Who was** king Uzziah?

We will be coming back to Is 6 but please turn to II Chronicles 26 where we learn quite a bit about King Uzziah.

A. A long-serving King

V 3: "**Sixteen years old** was Uzziah when he began to reign, and he reigned **fifty and two** years in Jerusalem.

--52 years! That's a long time! What an incredible **blessing**—if he was a good king!

--What a horrible **curse**, though, if he was a bad king! What kind of king was Uzziah?

He was...B. A God-fearing King

--v 4 "And he did that which was **right** in the sight of the Lord..."

--v 5 "And he **sought God** in the days of Zechariah..."

C. A God-blessed King

--End of v 5 "...and as long as he sought the LORD, **God made him to prosper.**"

--v 7 "And God **helped him** against the Philistines, and against the Arabians..."

D. A protector of the people

--v 9 "Moreover Uzziah **built towers** in Jerusalem..."

--v 10 "And he **built towers** in the desert..."

--v 11 "Moreover Uzziah had an host of fighting men, that went out to war by bands..."

Life was good! They had a good king...that feared God and did right! The king protected the people—and God was blessing the nation because of him! In the **end of v 15** we see that he was marvelously helped...**till...**

Till what? Till **he was strong!**

Did God **stop helping** King Uzziah because he spent too much time in the **weight room**? That is obviously **not** what is meant! Look at v 16 "But when he was strong, **his heart was lifted up** to his destruction..."

--"his heart was lifted up..." What does that mean? He **became proud**, right?

So King Uzziah—because of his pride—goes from being a God-**assisted** king to being...

E. A God-chastened King

In the end of v 16, we see the king wanting to do something **only the priests were to do**—burn incense upon the altar! The priests warned him to stop in vs 17-18, but instead of listening to them when they **pointed out** his sin, he becomes angry. In v 19, we see that God immediately strikes him with **leprosy!**

--mid of 19 "...and while he was wroth with the priests, the **leprosy** even rose up in his forehead before the priests in the house of the Lord..."

--And in v 21 we see that he was a leper unto the day of his **death**.

And eventually he **did** die—and **after** he died Isaiah then had this vision of the Lord. One commentator pointed out something that I found quite interesting—especially in light of what some of us have felt over the course of the last couple of months.

J.H. Jowett wrote: "The **national** problem was to Isaiah a **political** problem. The ultimate foundation of national prosperity was **stable government**. The wise handling of **political forces** was the **one essential** for the continuity and grandeur of the nation's life. That was the **plane of thought** and life on which Isaiah moved, and on that plane he must find his heroes. He found the hero in Uzziah.... What will become of the world when Uzziah dies? When the master of statecraft **is gone, in whose hands** will the rulership rest?That was Isaiah's fear, begotten by his hero worship. Well....Uzziah died."

Hero worship may have happened to Isaiah—and hero worship can certainly happen to any **of us!** God is zealous for His glory, though, isn't He? **He** is the one we are to look to—and trust in—and it is possible Isaiah was trusting too much in an earthly king and not enough in the King of Kings! Is it possible we've done that?

Let's go back to Isaiah 6 and consider next... **2. The contents of the vision.** What did Isaiah see?

A. God seated on a throne

The picture Isaiah paints for us is certainly that of a king. V 1 "I saw the Lord"—*Ad-o-noy*, in the Hebrew—often translated "master"—"**sitting** upon a throne."

--He is not fretting...or walking...or working—He is at rest; in complete control!

--It is not just **any** throne, though—it is "high and lifted up." This king—**the** King over all kings—is on a throne higher than all thrones.

--His large, loose, majestic flowing robe has a **train**—the part that follows behind when you walk—fills the temple! And then **in v 2**, Isaiah begins to describe the **seraphim**. So that's it: Isaiah uses **just 14 words**—from one verse—to describe God! Let's notice next what we learn about God from the **6-winged seraphim**.

B. Seraphim standing around the throne

How many are there? Don't know for sure because we aren't told! We do know there are at least two, however, from v 2—"seraphims: **each one**" and v 6—"Then flew **one** of the **seraphims** unto me..."

i. The description of the seraphim

V 2 "Above it"—the throne—"stood the seraphims"

--**Above it** probably means surrounding it. It certainly doesn't not mean they were more important than the King seated on it!

--Were they literally **standing**? Probably not because the end of this same verse says they **flew!**

What we do know is they were **not** sitting—they were not **being served**—because they were the **servants!**

--With twain (two) of the wings he covered his **face**, and with twain he covered his **feet**.

Most commentators suggest that to cover both the **face and the feet**—which was probably the **lower extremities** as well as the feet—signifies the awe and reverence that these angels had in the presence of God.

--With twain (two) they **did fly** probably indicates their willingness to carry out the commands of God at a moment's notice.

ii. The declaration of the seraphim

V 3. "And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory." **Barnes** suggests "they cried to each other in alternate responses. One cried 'holy;' the second repeated it; then the third; and then they may have united in unison to cry, "the whole earth is full of His glory." Whether that is **exactly** what Isaiah saw and heard is hard to know for sure, **but we do know this:**

--The **holiness** of God is being **emphasized**. God is holy, isn't He? But what does that **mean**?

There are 2 "sides" of God's holiness.

1) God is **separate** from all that is unclean and evil. He never does anything wrong—ever!

Hab 1:13a "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity..."

2) God is not just separate from sin—He is **perfectly pure!** He is the standard of perfection by which we determine whether something is good or not!

--If you want to be a perfect **bowler**, you must compare **your** score to the perfect score—300!

--If you want to be a perfect **person**, you must compare yourself to the only perfect Being—God!

This is not the only place in the Bible where we find the **thrice-repeated** declaration that God is holy. In Rev 4:8, we see **four** living creatures—also with 6 wings—who "rest not day and night, saying, Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come."

Theologians often debate which is the predominant attribute of God; what is the **characteristic** of God that is above all others? Some suggest it is **love** and they believe that love, in the end, "wins." But they forget that God is holy. They forget that nowhere in the Bible does it say, 'God is **love, love, love**'—but twice it says God is "holy, holy, holy!"

The greatest proof, in my mind, that God is **holy above all** else is not in these declarations—it is **in the cross!**

If God were not **holy** above all else, sin would not **need to be punished or paid for**—love would win! Love does not ultimately **win**, though. God—in the end—**does not overlook** sin and **does not allow everyone** into heaven. You **cannot** find that teaching anywhere in the Bible. But we do find the teaching that if you **don't have Christ**, you will not be allowed entrance into heaven. Many verses; here are two:

John 3:36 "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that **believeth not the Son shall not see life**; but the **wrath of God abideth on him.**"

John 8:24 "I said therefore unto you, that ye shall **die in your sins**: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall **die in your sins.**" To die in your sins means to die unforgiven! Love won't rescue you if you **die w/o Christ!**

3. The conclusion from the vision

So **why** did God reveal Himself to Isaiah? What was the purpose behind it? What was God trying to do?

Pretty safe to say that at least **one reason** was so that Isaiah would **humble himself!**

Why do I say that? Because **that is what happened**—and God recorded it so we would **know** it happened!

--V 5: "...**Woe is me!** For I am undone...."

--'I'm miserable! I'm pierced through! I'm **ruined!** I'm in trouble!'

Job makes a similar "Woe is me" statement after seeing more fully the greatness of God. **Job 42:5-6** "I have **heard of thee** by the hearing of the ear: **but now mine eye seeth thee.** ⁶Wherefore I **abhor myself**, and repent in dust and ashes."

Why did Isaiah cry "**Woe** is me?" Why did he feel he was ruined? Verse 5 goes on: "...because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips..." When Isaiah got a glimpse of God and His holiness, he became keenly aware of **his sin**. "I am unclean"—I personally am sinful—and so are the people that I dwell with! God came to Isaiah to humble him—and Isaiah recognized his need to repent of his sin!

In the way of **illustration**, I remember well the early months of 1980. I was taking pre-med classes at UW-Eau Claire because I believed God wanted me to be a doctor. I worked hard in college—so hard that I had no time for the Bible...no time for church...and no time for prayer. 'I would get back to doing those things **after** I got done with college and med school—when I **had more time**'—I often told myself.

But God began to work on me. God reminded me of a song—actually a Bible verse—that I had learned at a Bible camp where I had been saved roughly 8 years earlier. The verse? **Mt 6:33**. And God used that verse to show me the **hypocrisy** of telling others that God wanted me to be a doctor at the same time I was leaving Him out of my life!

And I found out—just as we will see that Isaiah found out—that when we **humble ourselves** after getting a fresh view of God, God comes to us to comfort and forgive us.

I'm calling that **4. God's consolation in our humility**

Notice verses 6-7 "Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: ⁷And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged."

So there it is: our iniquity is taken away—and our sin is purged—**if** an angel comes and puts a hot coal on our lips! If that were the case, it would be pretty easy to tell **who was forgiven** & who **wasn't**, wouldn't it? Is that the **lesson** God wants us to learn from these 2 verses of Isaiah's vision? No; but here are a few...

A. God comes to us when we humble ourselves

Some of you might be thinking, 'Wait a minute, Pastor. **An angel** came to Isaiah, not God!'

V 6 "Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand..." To have a live coal in his hand, he would have to take at least one wing off his hands or feet. He would not just randomly leave his place around God's throne...or his part in God's choir...to pick up a coal & bring it to Isaiah—w/o direction from God!

B. God provides the way for sin to be removed—we don't

What was Isaiah's part in all of this? What did he do? Absolutely **nothing!** He didn't come up with the plan...or carry out the plan! In fact, he didn't even reach out his hand to take the coal! God did it all!

C. God declares the removal of sin—we don't

Vs 7 "And he [one of the seraphim] laid it [the live coal] upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken way, and thy sin is purged."

--Isaiah didn't **come up** with the way to be forgiven—God did

--Isaiah didn't **carry out** the way to be forgiven—God did

--And Isaiah didn't declare he was forgiven—God did!

Isn't that what we should want—to have **God** declare that we are forgiven?

--Who cares if **man** says we are forgiven—what **God** says is what we should be interested in!

What does God say about forgiveness of sin? I John 1:7 reminds us that the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.

So what happens—or at least should happen—when we get a proper view of God?

--We should **humble** ourselves.

And what happens when we humble ourselves? God comes to us with comfort and forgiveness. Notice what Isaiah wrote sometime after this experience. **Isaiah 57:15** “For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, **whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit**, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.”

What a wonderful God we have! He is **holy**—and dwells in the high and holy place—and yet, He also chooses to **dwell with** the humble! Isaiah found that out—and I found that out as well.

When I saw God in a fresh way and humbled myself, He not only **forgave** me—He began to dwell with me in a way that I had never experienced before that. **Jer 29:13** became a very important verse to me at that time: “And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.”

How about you? Do you **have** that? Do you **want** that? God will dwell with us in a very special way if we humble ourselves and seek Him in His way—and with all of our heart.

So what does God want us to do in light of what we have heard from His Word today?

1. First, do you have a Biblical view of God? Seeing God in **His holiness**—and us in **our sinfulness**—should show us we are **undone** and **doomed**; not worthy to dwell in His presence. God provided a way of forgiveness—and His name is Jesus!

Do you have Jesus? Are you born again? Are you a child of God?

2. Second, if you are a child of God, is it possible that you need a fresh view of God this morning? Is it possible that you've gotten lax about sin—or lazy in your service for God—and need a reminder of His holiness?

Seeing God on His throne as King should **humble** us the way it did Isaiah and Job.

--It should make us grateful that we have been forgiven

--And it should make us amazed that He chooses to dwell with us in a special way when we have a contrite and humble spirit