

**HERE AM I
Isaiah 6:1-6**

In case you have forgotten, our theme for 2009 is “Little Is Much”. For the last few weeks, I’ve wanted us to look at some little phrases that can mean a lot: just three words that can change a life.

The three words I want us to consider this morning come from Isaiah chapter 6. I would like for you to turn to that passage of scripture if you would. For those of you using the pew Bibles from the rack in front of you, that text begins on page 680. Isaiah 6, starting with verse 1: page 680 in the pew Bibles.

Would you please follow along as I read?

In the year that King Uzziah died...

Let’s stop there. Let’s stop and refresh our memories on who King Uzziah was.

King Uzziah was also known as Azariah. Herbert Lockyer writes that Uzziah’s “story can be gathered around three aspects:” his prosperity, his pride and his punishment.

Uzziah was, indeed, a prosperous king. His father, Amaziah, had been king of the nation of Judah. Amaziah was assassinated following a profound military defeat at the hands of the nation of Israel. After Amaziah’s death, the people chose his 16-year-old son, Uzziah, to become the next king of Judah.

Uzziah reigned for 52 years: a remarkable tenure in those days. He was an exceptionally effective king, one of the most effective after Solomon. A detailed list of his accomplishments is recorded in II Chronicles 26. II Chronicles 26:5 says that as long as Uzziah sought the Lord, God gave him success.

- He went to war against the Philistines and broke down the walls of the cities of Gath, Jabneh and Ashdod and then he rebuilt new towns near Ashdod.
- He defeated the Arabs who lived in Gur Baal.
- He defeated the Meunites.
- The Ammonites paid monetary tribute to him.
- He built fortifications around the city of Jerusalem.
- He built guard towers in the desert and dug cisterns there to water his large herds of livestock.
- He had a large, well-trained and well-equipped army.
- And he was an inventor. II Chronicles 26:15 says that, in Jerusalem, “he made machines designed by skillful men for use on the towers and on the

corner defenses to shoot arrows and hurl large stones.” That seems to say that he invented catapults and mechanical crossbows for the defense of the city.

- The very next sentence summarizes:

His fame spread far and wide, for he was greatly helped until he became powerful.

And the next sentence begins with the word “But”. *“But, after Uzziah became powerful, his pride led to his downfall.”*

What happened was that Uzziah took it upon himself to enter the temple and offer incense on the altar of incense; and that was a function reserved only for the priests.

In the movie, Frost Nixon, former President Richard Nixon is quoted as having said, *“When the President does it, that means that it is not illegal.”* That seems to have been the attitude of Uzziah. He had been very successful and the hand of God had been on him. But his success seems to have gone to his head and in his pride he decided that if he wanted to do something that was reserved only for the priests, he should be able to do it...because *“When the King does it, that means it is not wrong.”*

The priest, Azariah and 80 other priests with him, confronted the king and told him that what he was proposing to do was not right. And they told him to leave the sanctuary *“for you have been unfaithful; and you will not be honored by the Lord God.”*

The mighty King Uzziah was not accustomed to people telling him what to do so he became angry and raged at the priests, right there in the temple of the Lord. God’s judgment was swift and severe. Right as he was in the middle of his tirade, Uzziah was stricken with leprosy on his forehead.

Uzziah was hustled out of the temple, out of the city and into the solitary life of a leper. He could have no contact with anyone who was not afflicted with leprosy because of the fear that the disease might be highly contagious.

Uzziah’s son took over the rule of the realm, although Uzziah was still considered the ruler of the nation of Judah. But he was a king in name only. And he remained a leper until the day he died. And when he died, he was not buried with the other kings because he had leprosy. He was buried in a field near them. And the obituary for this once mighty king, recorded in II Chronicles 26:23, was simply *“He had leprosy.”* That’s it. Not talk of his royal birth. No mention of his military victories or his many accomplishments. Nothing about his inventions or his wealth or his fame. Three words: *“He had leprosy.”*

I. SEEKING GOD'S WILL

Isaiah, the prophet of God, wrote:

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne.

Will you indulge me? I want to stop there again. The throne of Judah is vacant and the prophet is seeking God's will for who the next king should be.

What a stark contrast to the way it often happens today. We consider our options; we calculate the benefits and cost out the liabilities. We consult the people whose opinions we value and we make a decision. Then we have a prayer meeting and ask God to bless our decision.

Isaiah sought to know the will of God so that he could make the blessed decision in the first place. So often our prayers reveal a selfishness that could almost be expressed as "Thy Kingdom come and my will be done." It would revolutionize our praying, our worship and our lives if we were to honestly and sincerely seek to know the heart and mind of God and then learn to pray in harmony with Him.

That is the picture of the prophet when God granted him a vision of His will for His people.

II. SEEING THE LORD'S HOLINESS

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. 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. And they were calling to one another:

*"Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty;
the whole earth is full of His glory."*

At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke.

In the year that the king died, Isaiah was granted a vision. And, oh what a vision it was! Isaiah was granted a vision of the Lord. But it was not just a vision of the Lord in some sort of ephemeral sense or in some sort of abstract way. Isaiah saw God in all of his holiness.

Biblically, the word "holy" means set-apart. Anything that is set apart for the Lord is to be considered as holy or sacred. It belongs to Him.

But of all that which is set apart, there is nothing that is more definitely set apart than God, Himself. God is so unlike anyone or anything that we

ever have or ever will experience, that we must regard Him as holy: set apart, unique and perfect in every way.

That fact became Isaiah's vision. He saw the Lord in all of His holiness. He was on a throne that was high and exalted: above all other living creatures on earth or in heaven.

Isaiah saw the Lord in regal robes and the train of His robe, a mark of His nobility, completely filled the temple.

Isaiah saw the Lord attended by seraphs, angelic beings, who were so awed by the Lord's majesty that even they had to cover their faces rather than look on His unfiltered holiness.

Isaiah saw the Lord, worshipped by these seraphs who called out to one another saying, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty." But they did not so much call out to one another as they did thunder to one another about the holiness of God. Their voices were so loud, so rich and so resonant that the doorposts and the thresholds shook with the booming sound of their worship.

Isaiah saw the Lord's holiness

III. **SENSING HIS OWN SINFULNESS**

And having seen the Lord's holiness, Isaiah was overwhelmed with a sense of his own sinfulness. In the very next verse, Isaiah records his reaction to what had been revealed to him:

"Woe to me!" I cried. "I am ruined! For I am a man with unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty."

Isaiah knew that he was a doomed man. The Law said, in Exodus 33:20, among other places, that no one can see the face of God and live. And Isaiah had just seen the Lord. He knew that he was condemned.

A true view of a holy God will always make us very aware of our own sinfulness. I have had some people who, in the past, have told me I need to preach more hell-fire and damnation sermons. They have said they think I ought to focus more on sin and the fate of sinners. Obviously, I disagree or I would do more of that. I believe that the more I preach about God and his holiness, righteousness and perfection, the more people will be convicted of their own sin. I won't have to convict them, their hearts will do the job quite well.

And such was the experience of Isaiah, the prophet.

IV. SAVORING HIS FORGIVENESS

“Woe to me!” I cried. “I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I love among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty.”

Then one of the seraphs flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. With it he touched my mouth and said, “See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for.”

Is it possible for you to imagine Isaiah’s relief? He had just concluded that he was a condemned man, doomed to die because he had seen God. But then, wondrously, provision was made for his forgiveness.

Wouldn’t that be like a death-row inmate learning that he had been pardoned? Wouldn’t that be like a terminal patient finding out that he had been miraculously cured?

What would it be like for a condemned person to get such a reprieve? Ask any Christian. He should be able to tell you because that is the experience of everyone who is in Christ.

Each one of us who has come to know Jesus, has seen the Lord face to face. And each one of us became profoundly aware of his own sinfulness in light of God’s perfect holiness. Each one of us knew that he was doomed with no hope for reprieve or pardon. And each Christian has experienced the joy of forgiveness.

We sing a lot of songs about forgiveness. Of course we would. Our sin had been the dominant thought of our minds when we first glimpsed the holiness of God. But our forgiveness became the theme of our lives when He pardoned us. Isaiah savored his forgiveness...and we relish ours once we came to acknowledging we needed it and then came to accept it.

V. SERVING HIS SAVIOR

So what do you say when someone has just saved your life? “Thanks” seems a bit trivial. “What do I owe you” seems a bit trite.

Having been cleansed, forgiven and saved, Isaiah records:

*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!”*

What do you say to someone who has just saved your life? I guess the right answer is “Here am I.” Whatever you want. Wherever you want.

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Whenever you want. I am yours. I owe you my life so for the rest of my life, you name it and I will do it...I will be it.

That was Isaiah's reaction to his forgiveness and God says that is to be ours, too. Whatever, wherever, whenever, how ever, it doesn't matter. I will serve Thee because I love Thee.

INVITATION: #660 – *"I Will Serve Thee"*