



TRUTH APPLICATIONS

Sermon Notes

"Who Will Go For Us?"

Isaiah 6:8-13

Introduction

1. For several weeks, we have considered some of the most basic themes of biblical faith.
 - a. We talked about the importance of seeing God, and looked at some aspects of what it means to know him.
 - b. We talked about sin: its pervasiveness, effects, and nature; and at least some of what it means to be relieved of its burden.
 - c. We talked about Jesus, the final and most complete revelation of God, what his coming accomplished; how he fulfilled God's promises; and the blessings he provides for us in his death, burial, resurrection, and exaltation.
 - d. We talked about what being made new by Jesus and following him means for finding peace, living a new life, and handling the tribulation of suffering.
2. Today, we will deal with another important basic theme: what difference does being one of God's people make in the world? To explore that, we return to the last few verses of the chapter that we've used as a baseline for our study, Isaiah 6, this time vv. 8-13.

Body

I. Willing Servants Are Needed (6:8).

- A. Recall what Isaiah 6's presentation of the prophet's call shows us about his service.
 1. The chapter begins with a vision of the glory of LORD of hosts in all his splendor and majesty (vv. 1-4).
 2. Having seen such a vision of the LORD, Isaiah saw himself as too few of us do.
 - a) The subject of a funeral lament ("Woe is me!") because he was "lost" (v. 5).
 - b) A man whose lips were unclean, just like his fellow Israelites (v. 5).
 3. Isaiah's self-awareness amounted to a confession, expressing a longing to be in the relationship with God for which he was created; accordingly, God initiated his cleansing, his forgiveness (vv. 6-7).
- B. It is then that the text turns to service.
 1. Isaiah now hears the LORD's voice, wondering who will go on his behalf to reach out to the unclean people among whom Isaiah lives (v. 8).
 2. "Then I said, 'Here I am! Send me'" (v. 8). In Isaiah's exclamation, we get the sense is of a man who was so grateful for his cleansing and newfound fellowship with God that he could not *not* go.

C. Isaiah's willingness and its motive were matched by Jesus' disciples, notably Paul.

1. He was a debtor to the gospel (Rom. 1:14-15), cleansed by grace despite a past more soiled than he would have once admitted (1 Tim. 1:15; 2 Tim. 1:12).
2. That explains his zeal and boldness in appealing to others to imitate it, as Philippians 3 illustrates.
 - a) Having reflected on his righteous past (in comparison with some who apparently thought they surpassed him) (3:1-6), he quickly turned to his surrender in hopes of knowing Christ (3:7-9).
 - b) His goal: to share all of Christ's life — the glorious exaltation (on which we are tempted to focus exclusively) *and* "the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, in order [to] attain to the resurrection from the dead" (3:10-11, NASB).
 - c) That was the driving force of his life (3:12-14) and the basis for calling his readers to similar commitment (3:15-16).

D. Who among us would argue that Isaiah and Paul did not make a difference? That they showed the only way to make a difference?

II. Open-Eyed Servants Are Needed (6:9-10).

A. Verses 9-10 are Isaiah's mission statement.

1. He is to say something to "this people."
 - a) The unflattering use of "people" is a recurring theme through Isaiah's early chapters: for their lack of understanding (1:3), their paganism (2:6), their willingness to follow false teachers (3:12, 15), and in reference to their rejection and exile (5:13, 25).
 - b) The phrase "this people" becomes a way to belittle their false pride (29:13-14; also 8:6, 12; 9:16; 28:11, 14).
 2. How far gone they were is evident in vv. 9-10, language that does not condemn them ahead of time, but reflects their unwillingness to hear the LORD's prophet.
 - a) They had dull [fat, Hebrew] hearts; in biblical thought, the heart is the location of the will.
 - b) They were blind, unable to see the truth that God's way is best.
 - c) They were deaf, closing their minds to the transforming message.
 3. The fervent preaching of Isaiah would only serve to give them more opportunities to follow their unfaithful course.
- B. How could Isaiah continue in such a ministry, stretching from the end of Uzziah's reign (6:1) through those of three subsequent kings (1:1; ca. 739-686 BC, 50+ years)?¹
1. Perhaps some of what sustained him came from the revelation a few verses later that some of the people would not be destroyed (6:13).
 2. But ultimately, what had to sustain him was found in his vision and memory of forgiveness from the LORD's altar.
 - a) It was the LORD who had commissioned him, the same LORD who had saved him and given him a glimpse of his majesty.
 - b) He was called to be faithful to the One whose fellowship trumped all else.

III. Faithful Servants Are Needed (6:11-13).

A. It is important to notice the re-orientation of outlook called for in vv. 11-13.

¹ See Don Shackelford, *Isaiah*, Truth for Today Commentary (Searcy, AR: Resource Publications, 2005), 28.

1. "How long?" is a question that points to the LORD's timetable, not the prophet's.
 2. Verses 11-13 further establish the reality we saw in vv. 9-10: this would not be a ministry filled with successful campaigns, but a prolonged battle with small victories.
 3. The verses also show something else about this ministry: from God's perspective, its success was not about saving the nation, but about judging it.
- B. Above all else, we must bring faithfulness to service of the Lord.
1. From our Savior, we should learn:
 - a) That Satan's interest is always in the easier way of short term success (Matt. 4:1-11).
 - b) That all soils are not receptive to the word (Luke 8:4-8, 11-15).
 - c) That even some who profess discipleship will turn away when the call is seen to be more about service than blessings (John 6:60-66).
 - d) That those who will serve best are those who take stock of the cost (Luke 14:25-33).
 2. Tangible success in ministry — or at least what we are tempted to see as success — is *never* guaranteed; but God's word will not return empty (Isa. 55:11), and he will prevail in ways that are often not what we expect (or would plan if we were devising the way; Isa. 55:8-9; see 1 Cor. 1:26-31).
 3. What is promised is that those who are "faithful until death" will be given "the crown (*στέφανος, stephanos*) of life," the reward of the victors, even when what precedes that victory is severe testing and tribulation (Rev. 2:10, NRSV).

Conclusion

1. Cotton Mather, who preached in New England over 300 years ago, once said, "The great design and intention of the office of a Christian preacher [is] to restore the throne and dominion of God in the souls of man."²
2. As Isaiah shows, that goal will be realized by God's servants who see him, bow before him, are forgiven by him, and serve him faithfully. May we be such servants!

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² John Piper, *The Supremacy of God in Preaching* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1990, 2004), 22.