

KING OF KINGS LUTHERAN CHURCH



Isaiah 6:1-8

A Glorious Lord is our Savior

When facing a big problem, it helps it break it down to small step that lead to a solution. If you have a big credit card debt, you cannot just write one check to pay it off. So you take small steps. First you reduce and control spending so that you don't go further into debt. Then you budget for payments so that you can slowly pay off the debt. As each step works you feel a sense of progress. The massive problem shrinks down to something we can deal with.

God is, of course, not a problem. But we have a tendency to shrink him down to a manageable size. In some ways there's nothing wrong with that. God himself made it easier for us to understand him in the person of Jesus. Jesus' humanity makes God someone we can comprehend. We understand his love for us as we see him on the cross. We understand his will for us as we hear the simple and clear parables. We better understand his power as he calms storms and raises the dead. God wants to be known!

Trinity Sunday is not a day for a small, manageable God. Today is a day to realize that we cannot manage God — he's not a genie that we can summon and control. Today is a day to be overwhelmed by the greatness of God.

The prophet Isaiah had a vision in which he saw God seated in heaven. God was surrounded by angels that are called *seraphs*. Their name means "fiery ones." In humility these mighty *fiery ones* cover up before God. They didn't view God as small, but were awed by him. They called back and forth to each other, "**Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.**" So mighty were their voices that the foundations of heaven shook from the sound of their calling.

Isaiah was overwhelmed. "**Woe to me!**" he cried out. He thought he was as good as dead. He didn't belong in this greatness.

How often aren't we tempted to make God small? He's just a genie, we think. "*Come out, God, I need you now. Please do as I say and give me what I think I need.*" In our arrogance we are fooling ourselves into thinking we have some control over God. Perhaps even worse, we are robbing God of the glory and praise that he deserves. If a seraph appeared here now, we would be frightened — not just because we've never seen one, but because it is a mighty servant of God. Yet, an angel that could overwhelm us, is humble before God. We dare not trivialize him or make him small.

The divine math of one Father, one Son, and one Holy Spirit equaling only one God is confusing. All attempts to explain God's nature fail. You've probably heard some of them: an apple has a peel, meat, and core; water can be steam, liquid, or ice. But God isn't part Father, part Son, and part Holy Spirit like an apple. Nor does God change to be the Father when needed and the Son or the Holy Spirit at other times like water changes to be ice or steam. After the sermon we will read from the Athanasian Creed. It is perhaps the best explanation of the Triune nature of God. One person commented that while the Athanasian Creed accurately teaches about God, it "*saves itself by contradicting everything it says as fast as it says it.*" Listen as we confess it this morning: "***The Father is eternal, the Son eternal, the Holy Spirit eternal; yet they are not three who are eternal, but there is one who is eternal,***" and "***So the Father is God, the Son is God, the Holy Spirit is God; yet they are not three Gods, but one God.***" Everything that is stated as fact is contradicted moments later. Augustine, an early church father, was overwhelmed by the doctrine of God's Triune nature and said, "*In short, human speech labors under a great inadequacy. Nevertheless, we speak of 'three Persons,' not that that adequately expresses the truth, but so as not to pass over the matter in complete silence. For*

the ineffable grandeur of the subject cannot be explained by this term."

The human mind is overwhelmed by God. Good! Then you begin to know how Isaiah felt in the presence of God. God silently listened as Job's friends gave him foolish advice. God didn't speak until Job dared to challenge God. Job suggested that he deserved a hearing in which he could show God was wrong. Then God spoke. *How dare you talk to me that way, man. I am so much greater than you that not only can you not do what I do, you cannot even explain what I do. We are not equals. God is not a small God!*

Isaiah also knew he didn't belong before God because he was sinful. Isaiah felt guilt because of his words. The people he lived with had also said sinful things. He was dirty. He was not holy!

We dare not treat God's holiness casually. He is perfect. His appearance caused Isaiah to tremble. Sin isn't a slip-up. Sin isn't excusable. Think just of where Isaiah felt guilty — our words are sinful too! Our gossip and our lies, our talking back or talking bad — our words are often sinful. **"Woe to me."** I am unclean!

But as Isaiah crumbled under the grandeur of God and the reality of his guilt, God dispensed one of his seraphs. *Help him.* And the seraph arrived with medicine for where Isaiah hurt. The coal touched his lips and the *fiery one* assured Isaiah, **"Your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for."** *He's not like that, Isaiah. He doesn't want you to be afraid. He wants you here! You belong here!* The greatness of God is best experienced in the mercy of God.

Where does the guilt sting you the most and linger the longest? Each of us has our own point

of weakness and pain. A sin that is too often repeated or an attitude that won't stop. We need what Isaiah received. Put the blood of Jesus — the glorious Savior-God — where you hurt. His blood was poured out on the cross as payment for your sins. His forgiveness is perfect!

So perfect was Isaiah healed that when God spoke, looking for a volunteer to serve him, the once "ruined" Isaiah raised his hand, **"Here am I. Send me!"** He was eager to serve. He wasn't afraid of failing God, but knew forgiveness and grace would enable him to carry out God's work.

And so the forgiveness of Jesus enables us to serve. You may not be a prophet like Isaiah, but you are a servant of God. None of the work God has given you is unimportant. He has called you to serve your family or your friends, your church, and even at your job. Serve knowing that the blood of Jesus has touched you and healed the pain of sin. You are free to use your gifts to serve God.

When Isaiah's vision ended, God wasn't any smaller; he was even bigger. As we leave worship today, God is bigger in our minds too. Not only is his Triune nature too big for us to grasp, I hope that God's grace is bigger too. That's the best way to understand God. Know his grace and forgiveness for you. Know that although he's perfect and overwhelming, *he's not like that! He wants you near him! He wants you to know him.* You will not understand him. But by faith you can know him as the awesome God of heaven and earth who has saved you. Amen.

Trinity Sunday
May 31, 2015 

