

Blessèd be the Holy Trinity and the undivided Unity! Amen! Dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

"Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory!" (Isaiah 6:3).

Isaiah had a tough assignment as God's prophet for at the time of his calling, the Kingdom of Judah was well on its way to destruction and captivity. By including, ***"In the year that King Uzziah died"*** (Isaiah 6:1), this signaled the end for Judah.

However, the people had no inclination of destruction. For, under Uzziah's son Jotham, Judah extended her boundaries to their ancient frontiers. Commerce and agriculture flourished. This created a sense of national pride. And it was a time of prosperity and peace. The kingdom was flourishing!

The Kingdom of Israel to the north also experienced a period of national power. Under King Jeroboam II, Israel achieved military dominance in the area. But when Jeroboam II died several years before Uzziah, Israel plunged into an age of chaos. Four of Israel's last six kings were assassinated. Then Assyria invaded Israel and then demanded tribute.

Just as the death of Jeroboam II became the sunset for the Northern Kingdom of Israel, the death of King Uzziah marked the beginning of the end for the Southern Kingdom of Judah. Peace and prosperity would soon disappear.

As this was all happening, God never ceased sending prophets to warn of the judgements that He would send upon His people for their unbelief. Israel refused to listen to the Lord's call to repent. In spite of the warnings, God's people remained ignorant of the scope of the coming disaster. Worse yet, they were defiant, believing they could control their own destiny without God. The Northern Kingdom of Israel fell to the Assyrian invaders in 722 B.C.

You'd think that the Southern Kingdom of Judah would be well aware of what happened to the north. I'm sure, they had family and friends in the north. They were all well-aware of what had just happened. But did they repent? No! They just kept on getting more and more wicked.

Since the Judeans refused to repent, God would use the upcoming Babylonian Empire as His judgment on Judah and Jerusalem because God's people had forsaken Him. One century after the Northern Kingdom of Israel fell, the Southern Kingdom of Judah would fall in 586 B.C. The Babylonians ground Judah to dust and carried the Southern Kingdom into captivity.

Now, God never desired to punish His people. This is why He continuously sent prophets to call His people to repentance. But God's people persisted in their rejection of the Lord and His promises. The Kingdom of Judah decayed into gross idolatry, human sacrifices, temple desecration. They turned away from God's help and preferring only worldly help.

The death of King Uzziah signaled the beginning of a new era for Judah. Prosperity and peace would disappear. Judgment was on the way. This is the world Isaiah was living in. And he was the one called by God to proclaim God's coming wrath to a people who wanted nothing to do with God at all.

Throughout all this coming destruction, we hear about God's calling of Isaiah. Some have wondered why Isaiah includes his calling here in chapter 6 rather than at the beginning. One answer suggests that Isaiah first presented the heart of his message and then underscored the message with his calling. Isaiah presented in a visual way the triple phrase that we sing at each Divine Service: "***Holy, holy, holy***" (Isaiah 6:3). You see, Isaiah's prophecy comes from the Holy One of Israel.

Whatever the reason, Isaiah sees the Lord seated on His throne. The prophet notices the Lord first. What a sight! Isaiah identifies the One seated on the throne as the Lord, using a name that emphasizes His authority, superiority, and power. This is no ordinary king. He is the Lord of the Church who rules all things for the benefit of His Church. This is not just an ordinary temple in Jerusalem. Isaiah looked into the heavenly sanctuary, where God may be seen by saints and angels. Isaiah had the rare privilege of standing in the presence of the Lord.

Isaiah heard the angels sing to one another, "***Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory***" (Isaiah 6:3). This is the truest worship of God in its simplest praise and confession. This sound of the angelic hymn shook the foundations of the thresholds.

The One seated on the throne is holy, times three. He is set apart, infinitely separate and above all creation. In Hebrew, repetition expresses a superlative; God is supremely holy! He is perfect in power, wisdom, and majesty.

God's holiness also means that He is separate and opposite from all sin. God hates sin and because of His holiness, He must destroy sin like an antiseptic must attack bacteria. God would cease to be holy if He did not oppose sin and its consequences.

So, where does this put us – *you and me*? Are we any better than the Judeans? Do we – *you and me* – actually fear God's wrath more than man? Do we show any fruits of faith in our daily living? Do you despise God by neglecting the Word of God? If we are all honest, we all deserve the same wrath God put forward upon the Kingdoms of Israel and Judah. We all deserve to be grinded to dust.

But God's holiness is also a positive for us poor, miserable sinners. Because of God's holiness, He found a way to destroy sin and make sinful humanity holy. Isaiah, too, believed he should also be punished for his sin. He believed he was no better than any other sinner. He believed he deserved punishment. ***“Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips”*** (Isaiah 6:5).

In his vision, the Lord is responsible for the purification of Isaiah. And in his vision, those lips receive forgiveness via a means of grace.

The seraph obtained a burning coal from the altar in heaven. As Isaiah's lips were touched, the seraph explained what this meant: ***“Your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for”*** (Isaiah 6:7b). As the coal touched Isaiah's mouth, Isaiah experienced the relief of the forgiveness of his own sins.

This sin purging is not just for Isaiah, but for the entire world. Throughout his prophecy, Isaiah would also tell of God's gracious plan of salvation. And like the prophet Isaiah, we are in dire need of the salvation that God alone by grace alone has accomplished and provides for us.

Since God cannot be among unholiness, sinfulness, uncleanness, and darkness, He would make us – *who are unworthy* – worthy of being holy. Now, this is not done by our own doing. This holiness is only done as a gift from God. ***“When the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of woman, born under the Law, to redeem those who were under the Law, so that we might receive adoption as sons”*** (Galatians 4:4-5).

You see, the Lord purged the entire world of sin through the suffering and death of Jesus! This declaration that all the world is holy and righteous because of Jesus is an act of this holy God.

Those who believe and trust in Jesus are called “saints” – that is, holy ones. As “saints,” we are to be separate from the fallen world with its sin and death. As “saints,” we are set apart for the Holy God and receive all His blessings.

God has indeed provided the only answer to sin, rebellion, and perversion that plagues humanity. He has provided us Jesus. Sin is only purged in Jesus. For those who do not believe God’s answer to sin, they refuse God’s solution. They stand in opposition to God, choosing to offer their own solution to sin and death, and they can expect the holiness of God to execute judgment on the Last Day.

Until the Last Day, God is still a merciful God. He could have just let Israel and Judah fall to their own demise, but instead He sent prophets, like Isaiah, to warn them of their sinful condition. And even when His people were conquered, He gave them the promise of the Savior, who would atone for the guilt of their sins. God is still showering us with His grace and mercy as He continues to send spokesmen to carry His message of Law and Gospel to those who worship Him as the only true and triune God, who still provides visible Means of Grace, the bread and wine that touches our lips to give assurance of forgiveness.

Today is Holy Trinity Sunday, so why did it take me this long to speak of the triune God? Well, I have been. God is always in His fullness in Trinity and Trinity in Unity. In that triple phrase, “**Holy, holy, holy,**” we also see the nature of the thrice holy God: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

Just as Isaiah was cleansed when the coal from the altar touched his lips, so our Father cleansed us in the waters of Holy Baptism by joining us to Christ in His death and resurrection (Romans 6:1-14). In Christ, we were made new creations who love God, trust in God, and have His power to live holy lives. Through the Holy Spirit, we are made aware of Jesus and our need for Him as the propitiation for our sins. We are forgiven and made holy! Being holy, we live a life dedicated to Him, serving the triune God in our various callings. Blessèd be the Holy Trinity and the undivided Unity! Amen!

The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen. + **SOLI DEO GLORIA** +