

## **We're Going to See the King**

### **Isaiah 6: 1-8**

Rev. Philip Parker  
July 23, 2023

Suppose for just a moment you received an invitation to meet the king of England. What would that be like? Would you be excited or somewhat anxious? Would you be concerned about saying or doing the wrong thing? Well just in case you're wondering or in case you're hoping to receive such an invitation, here are some protocols that you might want to keep in mind for meeting British royalty. A slight bow or curtsy is always appropriate. Remember, the king always speaks first and is always addressed as "Your Majesty." The king always leads the way. If he stands, then you stand. If he sits, then you sit. When taking a walk, he always goes first. And if you're having dinner, he takes the first bite and when he's finished and arises, then so does everybody else. Never, never arrive late and never touch the king without his consent, including most assuredly any great big hugs. Finally, gifts are always appropriate, but be careful what you give because you don't want to give something that's inappropriate. After all, he is the king and he has access to and can probably afford anything that you might wish to give to him. And in case you feel a bit overwhelmed, don't forget the requirements for what you should wear to such an occasion. Wow! That's a lot to remember.

Now let me ask you another question. Suppose you were invited to meet the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. In other words, you were invited to meet the King, not the king of England or of some other earthly monarch, but the King of all Creation. How would you prepare for that occasion? Are there any protocols, any guidelines that would be helpful if you were summoned into His presence? In fact, there are, as exemplified in the passage of Scripture that was read a few moments ago. When the prophet Isaiah met the Lord, he provided us with a clear cut way in which to respond to such a momentous occasion. Let's take a look at what happened and specifically what Isaiah both experienced and said when he stepped into the presence of the Lord God Almighty.

First of all, it may have been an unexpected encounter. The Scriptures declare, "In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord." Who was this man who met the Lord, where was he when this encounter took place, and what was going on in his nation at that time? We know him, of course, as Isaiah, frequently described by Biblical historians as the "Prince of the Prophets." Beyond that, however, we know very little about him. Here's a brief summary. He was born around 770 BC probably in Jerusalem. He may have come from a family with royal connections and perhaps was not only a prophet, but a priest serving in the Temple. He was married and had two children. He served as a prophet and probably as a spiritual adviser to four of Judea's kings for approximately 40 years. He may have also founded a school for prophets as was often the case during those days. However, when Manasseh, a particularly vile and evil individual, became the king in 687 BC, Isaiah may have met his end, martyred for the sake of his faith. Indeed, his name means "The Lord is salvation."

With all of that in mind, let's take a look at what happened in the sixth chapter of Isaiah. This passage of Scripture is often referred to as his calling into prophetic ministry. As such it was, just as we are facing as a congregation, a time of transition. The godly and aged king, Uzziah, had just died. He had ruled for a long time and Judea had prospered under his leadership. Now he was gone and the people were wondering if his son, Jotham, would also be a gifted and strong ruler. It was a time of uncertainty and perhaps Isaiah was having some of those same feelings as he entered the Temple. Then something unbelievable took place. Isaiah was transported in the spirit to the throne room of the Almighty. This is what he saw—the Lord sitting upon a majestic throne surrounded by seraphim, fiery angelic beings with six wings, declaring God's holiness, their voices so intense that the foundations holding up the building were shaking, while the throne room itself was filled with smoke. It was an unearthly scene that probably scared Isaiah out of his wits. Even Moses, the revered patriarch of the Jewish people, had never been allowed to look upon the Lord face to face and here he was standing before the Lord God Almighty.

Immediately Isaiah became aware of his sinfulness, not only that God was utterly different from human beings, but also that He was pure, perfect, unblemished. In a cry of despair he cried out, "Woe is me! I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips among a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." Just like the villains in the movie "Raiders of the Lost Ark," Isaiah knew he was going to be vaporized in a heartbeat. But strangely, that didn't happen. Instead one of the seraphim came to him with a hot coal from the heavenly altar and touched his lips with that coal. Then the seraphim said, "Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin forgiven." Almost immediately, Isaiah heard the voice of the Lord calling out to him, "Whom shall I send and who will go for us?" Without hesitation Isaiah replied, "Here am I! Send me."

Can you even begin to imagine what that encounter was like? At the very least it was a transformational experience. The Lord God Almighty had commissioned Isaiah to be His prophet, His spokesman for the people of Israel. Unfortunately, the message was not one that they would welcome. The people had turned away from the Lord, worshipped other gods and were now facing divine judgement at the hands of their enemies. If Isaiah arose from the grave, he would probably address us in the same way that he did ancient Israelites, but that's a message for another day. Instead let's search for the kind of clues within this passage of Scripture as well as within our current order of worship that will help us to sense God's presence when we gather together for worship on Sundays. These occasions may not be as dramatic as what Isaiah experienced, but hopefully they can become transformational experiences for you and me as we live out our lives day by day. So let's take a look at the outline you found in this morning's bulletin.

- When we gather together on Sunday mornings for worship—which by the way means "to declare that our God is worthy of our praise and admiration"—our service must begin with a Holy Hush. I know that we want to greet one another as we enter the sanctuary, and that's good. We are the family of God. Each Sunday is a like a family reunion. But when the music of the prelude begins, it's time to refocus our attention. We're here to honor the Lord. Let's

open our minds and hearts and invite Him to commune with us. I can't imagine for even a moment that Isaiah went waltzing into the Temple without first realizing that he was entering into the House of the LORD. We need to do the same.

- Second, our worship must continue with a time of **JOYOUS PRAISE**. When we open our hearts and our mouths in adoration of God, we are joining with the seraphim who sang, "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory" (Isaiah 6:3). When was the last time you became so excited praising God that you were almost beside yourself with joy? At the church where I served as an interim pastor years ago, that congregation would sometimes just break forth in joyous praise, the entire church family singing, swaying, clapping and so help me I thought that on more than one occasion they might even start flying around like the seraphim.

- Third, our worship must possess an **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF GUILT**. That's what happens when we recite the "Prayer of Confession." Like Isaiah we are declaring that we are a people of not only unclean lips, but also of unclean actions and attitudes. Now I know that for some people this can become just a meaningless part of the liturgy. They say the words, but they really don't mean them. However, I don't believe that in the presence of a holy God, Isaiah was just mouthing a few words. He realized that compared to the awesomeness and magnificence of God, he was nothing, in fact worse than nothing. When we're honest with ourselves, so are we. Like filthy rags our sins cling to us. We have no right to stand in God's presence. Fortunately, however, like hot coals placed upon our lips, the assurance of pardon is a reminder that God forgives us when we acknowledge our waywardness and ask for His forgiveness.

- Fourth, our worship must include a **MESSAGE FROM ON HIGH**. What exactly does that mean. For starters it means that the message or sermon should be Biblical, an exposition of the Scriptures. As Paul stated so long ago, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16). Therefore, a sermon should be based upon God's Word. But there is something else to be considered. It should reflect what the Lord is saying to the one who is proclaiming the message. He too must be inspired, directed by the Holy Spirit to deliver what he feels the Lord has laid upon his heart. That's precisely what transpired when the Lord spoke to Isaiah. The Almighty said, "I have a message for you to deliver to my people."

- Fifth, our worship must become an **AFFIRMATION OF OUR FAITH**. That was not necessary for Isaiah, because his faith in the Lord was firmly established. However, throughout Israel's history, God's people were summoned on numerous occasions to reaffirm their allegiance unto the Lord. Remember what Joshua said to the Israelites near the end of his life, "Who are you going to serve, the gods of your ancestors or the God who brought you out of Egypt? But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord" (Joshua 24:14-15). When we affirm our faith

by reciting the Apostles Creed or some other declaration of our allegiance, we are reaffirming our faith, our desire and indeed, our determination to be the people of God.

- Sixth, our worship must provide us with an opportunity for **PRAYER AND PERSONAL COMMITMENT**. For many people prayer means “talking to God.” We share with Him our thoughts, feelings and needs and there’s nothing wrong with that. However, prayer is a dialogue. It’s a time for a us to talk with the Lord and also a time for us to listen to the Lord. Years ago, a devout Christian built a little shed behind his home. People asked him why he had built it. He said it was his “listening room.” It was the place he went to when he wanted to spend time with the Lord, seeking His leadership and guidance. The same thing happened to Isaiah when he entered the Temple. He spoke to the Lord, but more importantly he listened to what the Lord had to say to him. When we as a congregation pray and then sing that concluding praise song, it’s more than just a conclusion to the worship service. It’s our opportunity to reflect upon what we feel the Lord is saying to us and to then join with Isaiah in declaring, “Here am I! Send me.”

- Finally, our worship must conclude with a **BLESSED DEPARTURE**. In the bulletin it’s called a “benediction.” Basically it means “an utterance of good wishes.” In other words, “Go in peace.” And that’s a good way to end a worship service, asking the Lord to bless and watch over us until we meet again.

So there you have it, Isaiah’s encounter with God in the Temple at Jerusalem and a description of our order of worship at Bedford Presbyterian Church. But most importantly it’s an invitation for you and me to seek the Lord’s presence when we gather together for worship on Sunday mornings, because as Andrae Crouch has so wonderfully declared, “We’re going to see the King!!!”