

Holy Trinity 5/30/21
Isaiah 6:1-8 B

HOLY, HOLY, HOLY IS THE LORD OF HOSTS;
THE WHOLE EARTH IS FULL OF HIS GLORY!

Seeing our graduates in their gowns this morning makes me think of my own high school days. Especially, when the voice of Mr. Huber would come on the loud speaker and call someone by name to the principal's office. When your presence was requested in the principal's office, it generally was not a good thing. It would not be long before the classrooms and hallways would be filled with whispers of grievous and most grievous failures for which said individual was summoned to appear before the principal.

Even if you were never beckoned to appear before your high school principal in the domain of their office, you know that feeling all-too-well. Have you ever been pulled over by a police officer and the officer asks that most dreadful of questions, "Do you know why I pulled you over?" And your reaction is "Where do I start? ... I didn't come to a complete stop, I failed to use my turn signal, I was going a little fast back there." It's not long and you're confessing to kidnapping the Lindberg baby, right?

Why is that? Why is it that when we are in front of an authority figure, we just automatically think of our wrongs?

So how do you think the prophet Isaiah felt? He wasn't called into the principal's office and he wasn't having a conversation with the local law enforcement outside his car window. Listen to him describe his encounter with ultimate authority and perfect power,

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him stood the seraphim. Each had two six wings: with two he

covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!" And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke (vv. 1-4).

Can you even imagine? Words can't even begin to describe the sight! The Lord Almighty seated on his throne, the train of his robe filling the entire temple; billows of holy smoke; angels flying overhead, crying out praises to God so loudly that the firmest and fixed parts of the foundation were shaking; flaming, fiery angels soaring and singing – even these holy creatures cover their face and their feet in the presence of God's holiness – and in the middle of all of it -- **there stood Isaiah**. What comes to mind is the old Sesame Street song: "One of these things is not like the others, one of these things doesn't belong." It's obvious -- he didn't belong.

When the angels cried out, "Holy, holy, holy," they weren't just stuck on repeat; they were telling us something about God, and about us. To be holy means to be without sin. To pile on one after another "Holy, holy, holy" shows just how without sin and how far from sin God is.

"Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts," and you're not Him. Do you get it? Isaiah sure did. Confronted with the unveiled, unmistakable holiness of Almighty God, Isaiah quickly came to the only conclusion he could, "Woe is me! I am lost!" Isaiah knew that nobody could see God in all his glory, and live, because Isaiah knew just how far short he'd fallen from the glory of God, "Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts" (v. 5). So much for thinking that God is my buddy; that he doesn't mind if I do my own thing; that he'll validate my life choices just as long as I'm sincere. The holy, holy, holy God knows and

He sees your sins of thoughts, word, and deed. Isaiah confessed it right away; there's no sense in trying to hide – **"I am a man of unclean lips"**.

Confronted with the awesome holy, holy, holiness of God, what do you have to say for yourself? I'll tell you what you have to say – you can't be a perfect reflection of the holy, holy, holy God, so you compare yourself to your neighbor. After all, they're not exactly holy, right? "I come to church. I gave more in offerings. I'm certainly not as bad as that guy next door!" Really?

The worst of it, though, when confronted with the holiness of the holy, holy, holy God is that you try to arouse sympathy and passion in God, twist His arm, bend Him to your will. You think that if you cry enough tears of sorrow and repentance, then God will **have** to forgive you. If you promise – really, really promise with all your heart -- never to do that awful thing again, then God won't be so angry with you. Maybe you can just balance things out with God by doing something good. Really? How deep is the death of our sin that we think we can bribe God?

Confronted with the holy, holy, holiness of God, we can only confess with Isaiah, "Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips!" But the holy, holy, holy God knows that we can't stop there. It's like Jesus said, "Out of the heart comes evil thoughts, murders, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander" (Mt 15:19). I am a man of unclean lips, unclean hands, unclean heart, unclean mind. Everything is laid bare before the King of kings – every secret lust, every idle word, every hateful thought – all of it, when you stand in the presence of God's holiness.

"Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts". God is holy, but His holiness is not just a holiness that condemns the sinner. It's a holiness that saves the sinner. This holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty is the Savior God

who's wholly, wholly, wholly on your side in Christ. Look at what happens after Isaiah is crushed by the holiness of God,

Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a burning coal that he had taken with tongs from the altar. And he touched my mouth and said: "Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for."

What kind of God is this? On this Trinity Sunday, Isaiah answers that question for us: God is holy and demands payment for sin, so He paid for sin by sending His own Son into this world. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son" that's how you know this glorious Good News (Jn 3:16). The very Son of God took away your guilt and atoned for your sin. It's not your self-righteous judgment that you are better than your neighbor; nor your tears of repentance; nor your empty promises that forgive your sins, it's the **blood of Christ**. Because Jesus died on the cross as the punishment for your sin and it's wages of death, your sins are forgiven, forgotten, forever.

Graduates, in just a few hours, you will walk across the stage and receive a piece of paper with your name on it. Be proud of that. You earned it. But, you have another piece of paper with your name on it – your baptismal certificate. In the washing of water and the Word, the Triune God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit -- made you His own child and brought you into His family.

Do you know what that piece of paper means? The WORLD, in all of its perversity, will condemn you, criticize you, tell you you're not good enough, but that piece of paper comforts and assures you that, in the sight of God, God Himself declared you to be holy – without sin -- in His sight through Christ.

“Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts,” and in Christ, you are holy, holy, holy, too.

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.