

God of Holiness and Hope (Part 1)

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[0 : 00] We're going to take a little bit of a break from the Gospel of John for a few weeks to focus on God's holiness and what that means for us.

There are a lot of different series out there, and a lot of them talk about how to have better relationships in your family and in your work.

And those can be good things, but to me, I believe that if God is in focus in your life, if you see His holiness and what that means for you, it's going to impact everything that you do in every relationship that you have.

And so that will be the focus that we have this week. If you would please stand with me as we honor the reading of God's Word together, reading in Isaiah chapter 6. I won't cover all eight of these verses, but we'll be back here next week.

Isaiah chapter 6, verse 1 through 7. In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up.

[1 : 26] And the train of His robe filled the temple. Above Him stood the seraphim. Each had 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. And I said, 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. 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 has taken away. And your sin atoned for. Verse 8. And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, Whom shall I send?

[2 : 34] And who will go for us? Then I said, Here I am. Send me. And he said, go.

May God add a blessing to the reading of His Word. Would you please be seated? King Uzziah was dead.

He ascended to the throne when he was 16 years old. 16 years old. Handed a kingdom at an age when many parents are reluctant to trust their children with the responsibility of driving a car.

His reign in Judah lasted for 52 years. And comparatively speaking, he was a good king.

The Bible says that Uzziah began his reign well. Doing what was right in the eyes of the Lord. He pursued God and was blessed for that.

[3 : 44] As were his citizens. Uzziah was also victorious in battle. He fortified Jerusalem's walls. He ordered the construction of massive cisterns which stimulated agricultural expansion.

He restored the power of Judah's military to a standard which hadn't been seen since the days of King David. The people prospered under Uzziah.

They felt protected under his reign. And so, these people loved him. However, his good start ended tragically.

As is often the case in Scripture, when men begin to take credit for what God has achieved through them, they swell with pride and soon fall.

Uzziah's power and wealth and popularity corrupted his thoughts. He was the most powerful man in Judah.

[4 : 53] But he wasn't God. He was the sovereign leader of Judah. But his sovereignty had limitations. That were established by the one who is truly sovereign.

And so, one day Uzziah entered the temple. Which is God's house. And there he arrogantly claimed rights for himself.

That God had only given to his priests, not to his kings. And when the priests of the temple intervened and they pleaded with him to stop so that he wouldn't commit the sacrilegious act in God's house, Uzziah was enraged at them. He screamed at them. Furious with them. Who are you to tell me, the king, what I can and cannot do?

Who are you to defy me? And as he screamed at them, the Lord struck him with leprosy in that moment.

[6 : 01] Though he was king, he was a man. And he was not above the law of God. His leprosy meant that he would live the rest of his days in isolation.

Being cut off from the temple that he sought to defile until the day of his death. And though his life came to a miserable end, his people still greatly mourned his passing.

And his kingdom entered into a state of national mourning when he died. Think of it. Uzziah was the only king that most of those people ever knew.

And under his rule, they had become well acquainted with prolonged protection and prolonged prosperity. You know, we're used to changes in our nation and leadership every four to eight years. Sometimes we celebrate that change. Other times we mourn it. Though not to the extent I believe that these people did. Because we know that another election will come in two to four years.

[7 : 14] Think about this too. 52 years ago. 52 years ago, Richard Nixon was beginning his first year as president.

Now he may not be a good example, but could you imagine having one man lead for five decades and some change?

Picture that being your favorite president, whoever it may be. Imagine him ruling and leading for 50 years. You would naturally be attached to that person, wouldn't you?

And it would be hard to have that attachment severed by death. And like them, we would lament the passing of a leader under whose rule and reign we prospered and felt so much protection underneath.

When a king died in ancient times, especially a king that the people loved, the people were not only filled with mourning, but fear and apprehension.

[8 : 32] They would be wondering, who will the next king be? How will the next king rule? What will the next king change? What will this transition of power look like?

And what will be involved? They also knew that neighboring kingdoms and wicked men saw such transitions of power as opportunities to seize it and to test the resolve of the new king's strength. Which would mean that there could be war. They felt vulnerable. And their future, no doubt, seemed to them uncertain.

Times of transition can leave us feeling vulnerable, anxious, fearful, and despondent, can't they? None of which, though, are fruits of the Spirit.

And all of which distract us from our purpose as God's people. I confess to you that I've been feeling or had been feeling distracted from that purpose.

[9 : 38] Before leaving for vacation, the check engine light came on in my car. Then a day or two later, late one night, after Max and Ashton's wedding ceremony, Danny and I came home and together we reached for our ceiling light.

And as we pulled it gently, the whole thing came crashing out of our ceiling. This week I'll be at Falls Creek.

Next week I'll be at kids camp. And then in a couple weeks after that, my next doctoral class will begin. On top of those things, I've been distracted by the transitions that are taking place in our nation.

And also in our denomination. With the appointments of new presidents who have caused a stir. And as I was saying these things, maybe I should ask Caitlin to come up and play the violin for me in the background.

As I sing my sad song, it's really not that sad. But I know. I know that many of you are facing difficult times right now.

[11 : 00] I know that many of you are going through transitions that are much harder than what I've been going through. You've lost loved ones.

No longer able to pick up the phone and call a mother or a father who was always there. Or maybe it's a spouse.

A spouse that you spent most of your life with. Who has passed on. Some of you are in a state of transition with your health. No longer able to do what you once could.

Or maybe waiting for the test results to come back. Or you have tests that you know that you need to take. And you're uncertain of what those results will be.

Or maybe you're the spouse. Or a family member of someone who is going through such a transition. And that's hard. Or it could be that it's a transition in employment.

[12:06] Wondering if the time is right to stay or time to go. These transitions may have you feeling anxious. These transitions may have you feeling a little fearful or a lot fearful.

So much so that you've been struggling to go to bed at night. As your mind is filled with worry and concern. And you may even be asking yourself.

Where is God? What is He doing? Why is this happening to me? This is hard.

During His time of mourning and uncertainty. Isaiah went to the temple. Isaiah sought God. And as he did.

He received a vision from Him. That totally, totally changed his perspective. And as I've had time to read over this passage. And turn it over in my heart and in my mind.

[13:15] There's these two truths. These two facts about God. That kept jumping out to me. That have reoriented my focus. And that have delighted my soul. And it's the main idea for this morning's sermon.

God is a God of holiness and hope. God is a God of holiness and hope.

And so today I hope. That the Holy Spirit will take your eyes off the things of this world that are concerning you. And that He will fix your eyes upon your God in heaven.

That you will taste His holiness and delight in the hope that He offers to you. I pray also that like me, if you've tasted these things before.

That through His word, the Lord will again bring satisfaction to your soul and gladness to your heart. May the Spirit invite each one of us to share in Isaiah's vision of God's holiness and hope this morning.

[14:22] That we have in Him today. And so in Isaiah's vision, which we'll go over for today and next week. He provides us.

It provides us with several realities about God that reveal both His holiness and the hope that He gives to us. And the first reality we see and understand about God in this passage is that God lives. God lives. Verse 1. In the year that King Uzziah died, Isaiah says, I saw the Lord. His earthly king was dead.

But he saw that His heavenly king, the true king in heaven was alive. And you know what? He's always been alive. Before the ages began, before He brought the creation into being, God lived. God is the source of life. He lives today. He will be living a hundred trillion ages from now. The most powerful men in the world today, who sit atop the thrones of men, will be removed within the next four to sixty years or less.

[15:40] But God's reign is eternal. God's reign is everlasting because He lives eternally. Psalm 92 declares this of Him.

Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting, you are God.

God, do not place your hope in men who perish. Do not place your hope in men who might judge now, but one day will stand before the judge of the universe.

When Isaiah came to the temple, there was a crisis of sovereignty in the land, but God opened His eyes to see the true king of the nation, and that He was alive.

So Christian, never forget that your God lives. And never forget that your Savior lives.

[16:50] God sent His Son, Jesus. And Jesus refused the earthly thrones that were offered to Him by Satan and by men. Instead, as we've sung this morning, He embraced the cross.

Where there He suffered and He died to atone for your sins. And three days later, He rose from the grave to claim a vastly superior throne.

Giving eternal life to those who trust in Him. God lives. The tomb is empty. Faith in Christ brings eternal life.

And nothing can separate you from the life that you have in Him. Death has been defeated by our God who always lives.

The next thing that we see from Isaiah is that God is alive, but that God also rules. He rules. Look at the rest of verse 1.

[18:01] sitting upon a throne. Isaiah saw Him high and lifted up. Look at how Isaiah describes the placement of God's throne.

It is high. It's lifted up as high as it can go. No other throne is superior to it. No other throne exceeds it.

No other throne is on par with it. This is the throne to which one day every person will bow before. And who is on it? God is on it.

And what is He doing there? He's seated upon it. He's not out on the campaign trail. He's not out shaking hands and kissing babies. He's not checking His approval ratings.

He's not making empty campaign promises to secure the votes of men and their approval. He can never be voted out of office. No opposing authority could ever nullify what He has decreed.

[19:04] And what God has said He will do He has said better make sure that it will be done.

Isaiah 46 9-10 Remember the former things of old God says for I am God there is no other.

I am God there is none like me declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done saying my counsel shall stand and I will accomplish all my purpose.

Daniel 4-35 All the inhabitants of the earth are counted as nothing and He does according to His will among the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth and none can stay His hand or say to Him what have you done?

Remember being as being in elementary school especially for you boys there would always be that conversation between boys on the schoolyard about whose dad is the strongest.

Remember that? Well my dad could beat up your dad. I know I've seen your dad and your dad's wimpy. Right? But that was the whole conversation. My dad has guns. My dad has knives.

[20:14] My dad could beat up your dad. Well guess what? No one can beat up your heavenly father. No one can beat up your heavenly father. You're going to win that debate every single time.

No one is stronger than our God who rules. God is the supreme court. He is the legislator. He is the chief executive. All three.

There is no squabbling either for power in heavens amongst the Trinity. God has it. He has you. When life seems tumultuous.

When your path seems uncertain. When the future seems and looks bleak. Look to God for your strength. Look to God for your stability.

And in looking to Him you'll be filled with joy. My God lives. My God rules. My God makes promises that He keeps. And He has the power to ensure that what He has said will in fact come to pass.

[21:19] Look to Christ. Look to the cross. In the world He told us we will have tribulation. But He told us also take heart brother. Take heart sister.

He has overcome. And by faith in Him we will too. God is glorious. The next thing I say Isaiah saw. God is glorious. The rest of verse 1. And the train of His robe filled the temple. As a pastor I often have the best seat in the house at a wedding.

When I'm officiating it. I'm right there and I get to see that moment when the music hits for the bride to come through.

The door and those doors swing open and everybody rises and everybody's attention is focused on her and she comes through that door in that beautiful gown with that long flowing train behind her.

[22:28] It's a glorious sight. And I'll tell you I think every wedding I've done I've teared up seeing that. Just hold it together. Hold it together. Don't cry on these people's wedding day.

It's beautiful. It truly is. But as great as those dresses are and the trains of them I mean you've probably seen a princess be married before and their trains are incredibly long coming feet behind them and they get up to the platform and it covers steps it covers the platform but none of their trains fills every square inch of the room.

But God's does. And so what is Isaiah trying to tell us here about that. He's telling us that God is exceptionally and incomparably glorious.

There's nothing like Him. Creation is beautiful. How much more then is the One who created it all?

In New York Times I read an article this past week that mentioned an unnamed passenger had paid 28 million dollars to join Amazon founder Jeff Bezos later this month when his rocket company Blue Origin launches into space.

28 million dollars. That's a deal though compared to the three people who paid 55 million dollar each to fly with the crew of SpaceX when they take off next year for space.

[24 : 13] Which you wonder how do people have this much money right? First of all but then secondly why are they spending it to go into space?

Why are they doing that? You know as I thought about that I thought about the fact that well why did I spend money to go to the beach? Or why do we spend so much time on a clear night in the evening looking up into the skies and gazing at the stars?

Or when we see a full moon and you just look at it? Why do we do that? It's glorious. You know why else I think we do it?

It makes us feel small. And it sends shivers down our spine when we realize you know I'm a finite being.

And I look at the moon and I imagine what would it be like to walk there? And immediately I start shaking I don't want to do that. Even if I had 55 million dollars I would spend it some way else.

[25 : 26] But his creation is beautiful. the ocean space it's vast. But as beautiful as these things are you've got to understand that it's nothing in comparison to what your eyes will one day see when they behold the one who created and sustains it all.

When you go to heaven and you see God you won't want to look at anything else. It will be amazing. You won't get tired of what you see.

God is glorious. Verse 2 Isaiah's vision reveals to us that God is praiseworthy praiseworthy. Let's look at verse 2 again.

Isaiah describes this scene. Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings. With two they covered their face. With two they covered their feet.

And with two they flew. Isn't it hard to envision what these heavenly beings look like in your mind? Hallmark greeting cards do angelic beings no justice.

[26 : 57] Right? They're often depicted as these chubby little babies with these little tiny chicken wings floating around on these fluffy little clouds playing little tiny harps.

You know when I look at those pictures and they don't fill me with awe and wonder like what I read in verse 2.

the praise their praise of God shook the very foundations of the temple and so in that way we would do better to think of these beings not as portly babies but more like the blue angels seen the blue angels those four jets that fly in formation it's awesome isn't it to see how closely they're flying to one another and they're so in sync you know what also is awesome as they fly by and they go off in the distance and you hear that roar of the engines don't you and it's deafening and it's powerful and it's awesome but those are creations of men these beings described in are heavenly beings they're not flabby cooing babies drooling on their miniature harps while they serenade God they're magnificent and look they they can't even bring themselves to sneak a glance at

God they aren't sinful human beings burdened with impure hearts like us but as magnificent as they are they are still creatures and even in their lofty status they must shield their eyes from God who is so holy they don't feel worthy enough in his presence to even leave their feet exposed before him as great as they are as good as they are they revere their creator with the utmost respect and humility and this is interesting too because when we read scripture and we read of angels appearing before men in the bible these recipients of these heavenly heralds what do they do they're they're trembling before them in fear and here are these ones who cause men to tremble who tremble before god in heaven who is holy holy holy they can't help but praise him i wonder do you and i have that same attitude before god do we treat him with the same reverence do we exalt him with the same praise these beings were created to worship god and so are you however we too often direct that worship towards terrible perishable things of the world don't we not only that we often seek the praise due to god for ourselves we see it all around us in the world but you know what it happens in the church too you know what photo bombing is you know when somebody takes a picture and then somebody pops out in the distance you know i want to be in the picture too here i am like it or not we took a picture max and astronaut your wedding is just the illustration thing today we took a picture of hazel and her and her flower girl dress outside and it was a great picture but you know what there in the background was jack behind a bush doing something like this right and it's going to be hard to crop out it's like that was the best one

I got to get some of the glory too I'm here too she's the focal point but I'm here too look at me we do that in the church we want God to get the glory but if we're honest in the things that we do here we'd

like a little piece of that pie we'd like a little part of that praise for ourselves we're willing to serve God and I'm not saying that you don't enjoy it but there's a part of us isn't there often that thinks man I just want a little bit credit to a little bit of that credit just a little bit of the applause just a little bit of the appreciation for the skills and for the resources that I've invested in this church many years ago when

[32 : 10] I was first pastoring in my previous church I opened up a worship service in prayer and instead of asking for the congregation to bow their heads and pray with me I said please bow your heads and worship me total slip of the tongue total slip of the tongue in no way what I was wanting and the moment I said it I was terrified lightning is going to strike me I'm going to break out in spots of leprosy oh my goodness I'll never live this down it was hard for me to even share that illustration with you right now because it was so embarrassing but isn't that what we're basically saying when we want a little bit of the praise for ourselves we want to be recognized or when we're jealous for our own place or our own position within the church may we never forget this is

God's church and this is God's house and we are God's people this church isn't mine this building isn't mine this isn't my house this is God's house we are God's people to God be the glory in everything so we do that but you know what else I notice that we do too that I notice that I do think about your prayers how many times do you begin your prayer in the way that Jesus taught you know and I understand there are times where it's just lament it's just Lord what is going on but so often when we start our prayers it's this is what's going on in my life God you got to fix it what was what was Jesus first request in that prayer that he taught the disciples you remember what was his first petition

Matthew 6 9 pray then like this you had it Julie our father in heaven hallowed be your name hallowed is an old English word which means to make holy Jesus taught that our first request our great desire should be that the name of God be revered that the name of God be honored that the name of God be glorified that the name of God be obeyed and that the name of God be worshipped everywhere!

And think in the Old Testament God gave his people ten commandments! Ten commands to govern them! And the third commandment that he gave was that his name not be taken in vain! Imagine we all go to our representatives in Washington and we say enough of all of these rules that you give to us just give us ten!

[35 : 30] Just give us ten! They wouldn't do that but just play out the scenario do you think that they would waste one even one of those laws commands on revering the name of God no way no way God must be praised we must worship him God why the Bible tells us that we have so many reasons to give our greatest praise to reserve our greatest praise not for our favorite college team that plays on Saturday or our favorite NFL team that plays on Sunday or whatever the case may be we have more than enough reason our greatest praise should be given to

God you know the hope of every Jew in the Old Testament was stated in a benediction which is contained in Numbers chapter 6 verse 24 through 26 and it was a blessing that God had given to them he gave it to Moses who gave it to Aaron which was to be used to bless his people and this is what it was the!

bless you and keep you the Lord face shine upon you and be gracious to you the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace their greatest hope was that one day they would see God's face and you know what we know today on this side of the cross for those of us who know Christ is our Lord and Savior that their hope for we Christians is a guarantee of our future 1 John 3 2 beloved we are God's children now and what we will be has not yet appeared but we know that when he appears we shall be like him because we shall see him as he is this is the hope that we have been promised and we can be sure that no matter what we may be going through in our lives at present no matter how out of sort things may seem to be no matter how perilous the foreseeable future looks our

God lives our God rules our God is glorious and is worthy of our praise because he has overcome our sin he has overcome death by sending his son to die in our place for our sins by faith in him we receive his righteousness our God is holy and he makes us holy through faith in Jesus Christ the infinite who descended the glories of heaven adding flesh to his deity who purifies us by breaking sins curse and giving us eternal life where in which we won't have to shield our faces before him but will behold him in his fullness and when we see him we won't want to see anything else Christian you have so much to look forward to so much you have every reason in

God to be strong today to be hopeful right now to be joyful in every season of life because your God lives your God rules your God is holy he is good and that should give you so much hope and how else can we respond than to respond like Isaiah in seeing these things and knowing these things but to say here I am send me send me use my life God don't let it be somebody else make it be me I've seen you and you're awesome and you're holy and you fill me with hope it's me God send me Francis Havergal was born in England in 1836 exceptional young girl she was able to read and memorize the

[40 : 31] Bible at four years of age and when she was seven she began writing music but she lived her life in poor health and when she was 42 years old her physician told her that she didn't have much longer to live how would you reply to that listen to what she said if I'm really going it is too good to be true this is someone who who understood God's holiness and the hope that she had in him but before she died she composed many hymns!

one of which was take my life and let it be she was a woman of great faith her lyrics were inspired by a five day visit she took in which she came across a small house that was occupied by ten people and this is what she wrote of that experience some were unconverted and long prayed for some converted but not rejoicing Christians he gave me the prayer which was this Lord give me all in this house what faith give me all in this house and she says and he just did before I left the house everyone had got a blessing and she continues the last night of my visit I was too happy to sleep and passed most of the night and renewal of my consecration being set aside and made holy by Christ and she says and these couplets formed themselves and chimed in my heart one after another till they finished with every only all for thee

I'm going to read that hymn to you I will not sing it to you I would not dare do that to you not a good way to end but listen to her words listen to these words and you've sung them many times but stop and reflect this Christian sister take my life and let it be!

consecrated Lord to thee take my moments and my days let them flow in ceaseless praise let them flow in ceaseless praise take my hands take my hands and let them move at the impulse of my love of thy love take my feet and let them be swift and beautiful for thee swift and beautiful for thee take my voice and let me sing always only for my king take my lips and let them be filled with messages from thee filled with messages from thee take my silver and my gold not a mite not a penny would I withhold take my intellect and use every power as thou shalt choose every power as thou shalt choose take my will and make it thine it shall be no longer mine take my heart it is thine own it shall be thy royal throne it shall be thy royal throne take my love my lord

I pour at thy feet its treasure store take myself and I will be ever only all for thee ever only all for thee christian you have one life that god has blessed you with give him your everything and you'll never be disappointed especially on that day when you stand before him in glory and you behold the face of god for yourself and so may this dear christian sister who has long been with the lord now may her song characterize our lives and may her song characterize our church until the day when we see our lord let us live pursuing holiness and filled with hope let's pray heavenly father there is none like you there is none beside you lord you are you are indescribable how glorious you are lord we have this vision and it causes us to be filled with awe and wonder and yet we know that it's it's your word but gosh to see you as you are it's going to be amazing lord so often we focus on what's going on in our lives difficult times of transition and it's hard lord we lose focus we lose sight of our purpose god we're so thankful to know that you are a loving and merciful father that in christ we have a savior who identifies with what it means to to be human yet was totally without sin as we are so lord for each one of us this morning i pray that this vision would continue to play out in our hearts that we would remember that our god lives that our god rules that our god is glorious that our god is worthy of us so lord in the time that you've given us to live give it all ever all for me in

[47 : 15] Jesus name I pray! Thank you.