

Sermon Follow-up | February 9, 2020

Before the Exile — Isaiah

Focus Passage: Isaiah 6:1–13

Additional Context: Isaiah 6–9

Corollary Scripture: Habakkuk

Other Passages Referenced: 2 Chronicles 26:22; Isaiah 1:1–3,18–20; 6:1–8; 7:1–9; 36:1–20; 40:1–5, 27–31; 49:6; 53:4–6; 57:7; 58:1–9; 65:17

Sermon Recap: God’s people experienced two especially monumental moments of national trouble known as “the exile”. The exile encompassed the invasion of enemy forces, who basically demolished everything in Jerusalem, including the city walls and temple. Some Israelites fled to Egypt (2 Kings 25:26), and others who survived the attack were carried to distant Babylon for 70 years. The 5 major prophets and the 12 minor prophets speak to the context of Israel’s deep trouble related to the exile. The exile is God’s fulfillment of the covenant curses for disobedience found in Deuteronomy 30:15–19. We see in Isaiah that God spoke to His people in their trouble before (Isa 1–39), during (Isa 40–55), and after the exile (Isa 55–66). In the rest of the series, we will see prophets speaking before, during, and after the exile and each time, the LORD calls His people to acknowledge reality, to repent, and to experience rescue by His grace. Isaiah 1 shows God’s people trusting in religious rituals. Isaiah 7 shows them trusting in political alliances. Ultimately, they are trusting idols—“something that is not God that you rely on for that which only God can provide” (Tim Keller). Some lessons to live by from Isaiah 6 are: (1) Trust God will use your circumstances for His purposes (6:1); (2) Trust that God’s glory, even when hidden, is present (6:3); (3) Trust God’s Gospel to remove our iniquity and forgive through Jesus (6:5–6); and (4) Trust God before you get the assignment (6:8).

Interpretive Helps:

- Historically, under King Uzziah, the southern Kingdom of Judah had been strong and prosperous while Assyria had been relatively weak. After Uzziah’s death, his successor, his grandson Ahaz, would turn out to be wicked. Ahaz sacrificed his son in the fire to the pagan god Molech and set up worship to Baal (a fertility god). (See 2 Kings 16:3; 2 Chronicle 28:2, 22).
- Under Ahaz, Israel would decline, and Assyria would become the dominant international power for a time.
- An approximate big-picture timeframe:
 - 2000 BC – Abraham
 - 1000 BC – David
 - 722 BC – Northern Kingdom of Israel exiled by Assyrian Empire
 - 586 BC – Southern Kingdom of Judah exiled by Babylonian Empire
 - 1 AD – Jesus was born
- “The repetition of a word is a way of expressing a superlative idea in the Hebrew language.”¹ So, when the seraphs cry out “holy, holy, holy” in Isa 6:3, they are saying that the LORD is the holiest of all that is holy. He is set apart from all that is sinful and fallen in our world.
- One of the toughest parts of the passage is Isa 6:9–10, where God said He was calling Isaiah to “Render the hearts of this people insensitive, their ears dull, and their eyes dim” precisely so that they would not see, hear, have a change of heart, and be healed. After accepting the call about which he had no prior details, Isaiah found he was called to prophecy to a people who just would not listen and turn back to God. In Exodus, Pharaoh hardened his own heart initially and then God later hardened his heart. Similarly, the people Isaiah prophesied to had already

¹ Gary V. Smith, [Isaiah 1–39](#), ed. E. Ray Clendenen, The New American Commentary (Nashville: B & H Publishing Group, 2007), 190.

hardened their own hearts with idolatry and God later hardened their hearts as He was about to fulfill the curses from the Mosaic Law on them for their sin. The redemption and restoration of the people could not happen without judgment, and this was a time of necessary judgment.

Group Gathering

Connect: Making Honest Connections with One Another (Pick one)

1. Please share briefly one of the following:
 - a. How things went with your specific commitments to live out God's word with an "I will ..." statement in from our last meeting?
 - b. What God has been saying to you through His word or others?
 - c. A joy or answer to prayer you received
 - d. Trouble you experienced or are experiencing

Grow: Listening to and Learning from God's Word

Read: Deuteronomy 30:15–19 and Isaiah 6:1–7

1. What connection do we find between Isaiah's vision and his historic context of King Uzziah's death? (Isa 6:1, 5)
2. How did Isaiah respond to his vision of God's holiness? Have you had an experience of perceiving God's presence and holiness in such a strong way that you became keenly aware of your own sin and need for cleansing? How did you respond?
3. What do you make of Isaiah's confession, not just of his personal sin but also on behalf of his people in Isa 6:5? When you think about yourself and about being part of the people of the Church, what confessions might you need to make personally and corporately? Some examples are below:
 - a. Lord, I am a self-centered person and I come from a group of self-centered believers;
 - b. Lord, I confess that parts of me are racist and your Church still tends to separate your people by races;
 - c. Lord, I confess that I am too often indifferent to the poor and the lost and I come from a people that is indifferent as I am?
 - d. Other:
4. What happened after Isaiah's confession of sin? (Isa 6:6–7)

Read Isaiah 6:8–13

5. Why do you think Isaiah was willing to say, "Here am I, send me" before he knew where God would send him and what the LORD would send him to do?
6. What did God call Isaiah to do? ... How does God describe the people to whom Isaiah is being sent?

7. How does Psalm 115:8 explain the connection between the idolatry of the people and their inability to hear and see God?

Serve: Serving King Jesus and Others, By Living Out and Letting Others Know God's Word

1. In your times of trouble, what helps you hear the LORD's call to acknowledge the reality of His holiness and your sinfulness... to repent by turning from sin ... to trust the gospel that although we are more sinful than we knew, we are more loved than we imagined possible?
2. Will you trust the LORD to say, "Here I am LORD, send me" even though you have no idea where He may send you or what He may send you to do?"
 - a. If not, will you ask God to show you what is standing between you and that kind of trust?
3. Will you set apart some time in the coming week to focus your attention on God's holiness and what He means in calling us to be holy because He is holy? (Leviticus 11:44–45, 19:2, 20:7, 21:8; Deuteronomy 23:4; 1 Peter 1:15–16). Then spend some time reading Isaiah 53 to appreciate what it took to remove our iniquity and forgive our sins to make us holy.

Further Resources

- Bible Project – Isaiah Part 1 from Right Now Media –<https://www.rightnowmedia.org/Training/Post/View/209715>
- Bible Project – Isaiah Part 2 from Right Now Media –
<https://www.rightnowmedia.org/Content/VideoElement/204156>
- Illustrations and quotes from the sermon can be found on the "Sermon Slides" link at the bottom of www.wcchapel.org