

Our Gospel reading this morning is very familiar. We can imagine the shock of the overflowing nets requiring help. Such an abundance of fish, flapping around and sinking the boats. We are aware of the impetuous Peter and his knee jerk reactions. But they are authentic, and his awareness of his own sinfulness is a great lesson for us all. Balanced with his surprise at Jesus' concern for their needs and in their daily lives.

God is interested in saving us AND helping us in our day to day activities.

The Isaiah passage is one of my favourites.

I am overwhelmed with the awesomeness of this vision. A small glimpse of the majesty and power of our creator God.

Isaiah was a prophet, a spokesperson for God, and his book is the first writings of the Prophets in the Bible. He is considered to be the greatest prophet.

He was well liked at the beginning of his ministry. But like most, he became unpopular as he delivered messages too difficult to hear.

King Uzziah had reigned for 52 yrs, during which time he and his people had become very prosperous. On the whole his reign had been a time of great well being.

But there was corruption, and the king had profaned the holiness of the temple.

His son of 25 came to the throne as wars threatened from the north.

So, Isaiah found himself in anxious times; a new, young, inexperienced leader of the nation and the threat of war..

Uncertainty and fear for the future sent him to the sanctuary.

When I spoke about Zechariah at the beginning of advent, you may remember hearing about the ceremony that occurred twice a day; the incense priest walked through the courts with 2 other priests, striking a gong. They entered the holy place and the incense was lit and the crowds could see clouds of smoke. Isaiah's worries sent him to seek God in the temple. The loss of the King on the throne resulted in him seeing the Throned God of heaven.

It is interesting that our sorrows, losses, disappointments and pains often reveal to us the throned God.. In control with absolute power and authority.

When it's all stripped away and we seek his face (Psalm 27 v8) that thin curtain may be drawn back and show us the realities of the throned God. We are more likely to lean on him and recognise we need him. And so open ourselves up to his grace and love.

One of the writers I read whilst researching this said, 'When losses come to us He draws near, and those empty places can be filled by Him.' (MacLaren)

The busy full lives we lead often dim our focus so much we do not see God around us; in others and in creation. And we struggle to hear him. As we read scripture, pray, listen to talks.

Isn't it the case that in dire, difficult times we fall on his mercy fully surrendered.?

And we receive his comfort.

Our mighty Lord is always seeking us. A relationship, a connection. He wants to show us how much he loves us. But 'stuff' often gets in the way.

In an ecstatic trance Isaiah saw the vision of the glory of God, like Moses, Micah, and the disciple John.

The Holy of Holies was revealed showing God on His mercy seat, raised over the Ark of the Covenant. The King of Kings is seated on His throne surrounded by His angel armies of the host of heaven chanting their hymns of praise.

Hovering above the King Almighty, are 2 seraphim. Indescribably beautiful six winged creatures whose name means fiery. Their ministry is directly to God and his throne.

God is seated on His throne; what does this mean?

He is in complete control, reigning as sovereign ruler over all creation, with absolute authority and power. This power is unchallenged and everlasting.

This vision shakes Isaiah to the core. Everyone knew that if you saw God face to face you would die (Ex 33 v20) Moses was told by God he would die if he saw his face.

I have often wondered what it means when it reads, 'the train of his robe filled the temple.

The temple is the palace of the great King.

And the 'train,' describes the skirts of the glory of the Lord, who clothes Himself with light, as with a garment. (Also exodus 33)

Can you imagine being in Isaiah's shoes, or sandals!

A God given vision, so overwhelming, of Glory and majesty; incomprehensible description of angels; power so strong it's shaking the floor and building, like an earthquake; and so much smoke, veiling the sight, not making you cough and wheeze like a bonfire, but maybe smelling of incense. A sensory overload.

He cries out, 'I am ruined,' in the KJV it says, 'I am undone!'

Isaiah feels insignificant in this place

The weight of his sin and unworthiness is heavy.

It almost sounds like he is in a panic.

He is dazzled and devastated in the presence of Almighty God.

He confesses his sinful nature. Maybe, like us, he was reminded how other things can often take priority over God, and how loving others is sooooo difficult.

He confesses.

Confess also means declare, declare our faith. We do this most Sundays. We confess the name of Jesus. In Romans 10 v9, 'If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.'

We also confess how much we NEED God. That we acknowledge and accept His Sovereignty, power and might.

Let's circle back to our gospel reading..... Peter recognises, like Isaiah, his smallness and insignificance in the presence of such power. Jesus reassures them, the lovely, 'do not be afraid'.

Peter's honesty about himself and his recognition of who Jesus is, brings purpose, passion and a mission.

The painful burning coal that the seraph touched Isaiah's lips with, cleansed him, and purified him. God forgave him.

Overwhelmed with gratitude at being forgiven and permitted to live, Isaiah responds immediately and with enthusiasm to the question he has overheard to the Heavenly council. 'Here am I: send me!'

Like Isaiah, we too, need to be cleansed and submit to God before we can truly represent our pure and holy God.

The 'call' to mission that both the disciples and Isaiah had was in response to their confession of sin, of their need of God and recognising his authority and power.

Their response was to act.

Are you demonstrating your faith in your daily lives?

If you are not sure, there are lots of different ways to live out the faith you have.

Being an active member of this family is satisfying and life enhancing.

And most of all honouring God.

Recap..

God is awesome, powerful and in control.

The horrid painful losses and disappointments we experience, can reveal the love, comfort, and peace, that only God can give.

Confessing our sin and confessing he is king of our lives readies us to be his hands and feet on this earth.

Lets pray

Almighty God, we call to you in our emptiness and pain; we confess our sin and your sovereignty and we ask for the holy Spirit to fill us with all we need to be your representatives in this place. Amen