

**“HOLY IS GOD.”**

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**First Christian Reformed Church**

**October 13, 2019, 6:00 PM**

**Text for the Sermon: Isaiah 6:1-4**

**Introduction:**

I love Isaiah’s vision. I see it as a model of what it means to be a Reformed Christian and a Reformed Church. Biblical Reformed theology is about glory and grace, about seeing the glory of God, feeling the conviction of sin and our lostness and inability to save ourselves, receiving the free gift of God’s grace and the transforming power of the Holy Spirit which leads us to be agents of God’s transforming glory and grace in a culture that desperately needs this vision.

**Our text** offers us a very clear description both of our vision as a Reformed Church and the foundation under our vision. In a sense you could say that this text is both the house and the foundation.

So, this evening we begin with the “the Glory of God,” the first tenet of Reformed Theology.

If we don’t know God as He truly is, we are doomed. Without a vision of the glory of God it doesn’t matter what else we do.

Our text begins, “In the year that King Uzziah died.” *Uzziah* was one of the great kings of Judah, the southern half of the divided kingdom of Israel. You can read the story of his rise and fall in 2 Chron. 26. He reigned 52 years, a long time in those days and a long time today (Queen Elizabeth has reigned 67 years). But he still went the way of all kings and of all men. He died.

When kings die it creates anxiety and instability in a country. It’s a season of uncertainty and unrest. The king of Judah has died, but the God of Judah lives. As great a king as Uzziah was, there is one King who is far greater. Isaiah’s eyes were about to be lifted to a much higher king.

**What did Isaiah see, hear and feel?**

Notice he doesn’t describe God, that can’t be done, the closest he can get is to describe the things that surround God and happen in the presence of God.

**He saw the Lord sitting on the throne.** A throne that is greater than all other thrones; that rules over all other thrones.

At the center of the universe there is a throne occupied by the living God from which He governs the universe.

The throne reveals the sovereignty of God, His dominion and authority and power. This is the throne of government, from which all authority and government on earth gets its power and authority. He rules and reigns over all from on high; over everything on earth, over every molecule. Over sin and sickness and disease. Over tyrants and terrorist and tornadoes. Over all events and situations and circumstances. Over life and death.

We don't give God authority over our lives. He already has it, whether we like it or not. God is the Executive Branch, the Legislative Branch and the Judicial Branch all in one. This is the throne before which every knee will bow, every knee in heaven and on earth and under the earth and every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord (Phil. 2:10-11).

Isaiah saw the signs and symbols of God's utter and absolute supremacy and sovereignty. It should be enough to make you tremble. Later we will see that this is also the throne of grace and mercy.

**He saw the temple** and the signs of God's presence in the temple. He saw just the train or hem of God's robe and it alone filled the temple. Think of it. Picture the train or hem of God's robe filling this room. This room is almost 75,000 cubic feet. Actually, picture this splendid robe of the indescribable One covering the ground for as far as the eye can see.

Scripture says, "The whole earth is full of His glory as the waters cover the sea" (Hab. 2:14).

Where God is there is a filling, a fullness, a completeness. Where God is there is generosity in everything, He is expansive. Where God is there is splendor and majesty, there is beauty and magnificence.

The consummate purpose and goal of God is that His glory be universally manifested and become the fullness of the whole earth. "For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea" (Habakkuk 2:14).

**He saw spectacular creatures who were worshipping in the temple before the throne.**

This is perhaps the strangest and most remarkable mystery in this vision. This is the most unearthly of all the sights and sounds. We know of nothing like this.

This is the only mention in Scripture of Seraphim, which are considered to be the highest order of angelic beings. They hover around the throne and form an antiphonal choir. These are not your cute chubby winged babies that you can buy at the Christian Book Store.

Seraphim means “burning ones.” They burn, they are aflame with worship, zealous for God’s glory. They reflect the bright glory of God like rays of sunlight.

**Psalm 104:4** “He makes his messengers winds, his ministers a flaming fire.” They burn with love for God and zeal for His glory.

Notice their six wings, four of which cover and hide in the presence of such glory. These holy, sinless creatures are in the presence of something still far more superior and awesome. They are creatures before the creator. This signifies for us the depth of difference still between the holy and the holiest of all. This speaks of great humility and reverence and awe. God is vastly superior, supremely holy and high and lifted up. Even they are in awe of His glory.

If these angels are overwhelmed by the majesty of God, how great must it be? If an angel showed up here right now, we would recoil in fear at their brilliance and power. If they hide themselves in the presence of God, how much more will we?

**He heard the song of heaven.** They sing to the praise of His glory, they honor Him who sits on the throne, whose glory fills the temple and the whole earth.

They use one of God’s greatest names or titles, **The Lord of Hosts**. The Lord of all hosts. Isaiah saw the Lord of all, there can be no higher vision. They praise one of God’s most glorious attributes. God is the separate One, above and beyond the world, the entire universe, a being of spotless purity.

God is holy, meaning perfect, pure, righteous, just and true. This attribute is referred to in the superlative, three times. Good, better, best. This is the Bible’s way of underlining, highlighting and putting in bold. All God’s attributes are holy. His love is holy, His wrath is holy.

**What did he feel?**

Ever pull up to a stop light next to one of those cars that is really just a stereo system on wheels, and you don't just hear the music, but you feel it. The bass out of huge subwoofers rattles your windows and shakes your body. It is a seismic experience.

So, it is with glory. Not only did its sight overwhelm, but you could feel it. Not only was the threshold shaken, but the foundations of the threshold, down to the core, to bedrock.

Is this possible, that even "the building was seized with reverential awe ... in its deepest foundations...nothing stands immoveable or unsusceptible in relation" to God (Keil & Delitzsch, p. 194).

The temple was filled with smoke, yet another sign of the presence of God. Isaiah is in the presence of the one true, holy, living God, the Lord of all the hosts. An encounter with the glorious, holy, living God is truly a sensory experience, it overwhelms all our senses, the sights and sounds, smells and feelings.

### **Application and Conclusion:**

What does this all mean for us personally and corporately?

Let me answer the question in the negative before answering in the positive. What if we don't set God's glory as our highest goal and purpose? What if we don't give glory to God?

It will mean that we do not desire what God desires, that we don't want to be a part of His purposes for all of history, all of the world, all of creation.

It will mean that we don't want to do what we are created and called to do.

It will mean that we cease to be Christians. We cease to be Christ-like, for Christ's passion was to glorify the Father.

It will mean that we want to return to our old ways. It's said in Romans that the foolish pagans exchanged the glory of God for lesser things. To fall short of the glory of God is sin.

It will mean that we cease to be the church, for the church on earth exists to reflect God's glory to a dying and unholy world.

It will mean that we cease to be useful to God and His glorious purposes.

Please sense with me the urgency of our totally and completely embracing a vision that sets as its highest and greatest purpose the glory of God, to be loved and adored and worshiped and praised and sought after with all our heart and soul and mind and strength.

To encounter the glory of God changes you. It did Isaiah. The term “the Holy one of Israel” is used only six times in the rest of the Bible, but in Isaiah’s prophecy he uses it 29 times. Burned into his mind and beating in his heart is the refrain, “my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts” (Isaiah 6:5). It forever changed him. He would never forget it. An encounter with the God of glory is a life-transforming experience, a life-shaping event, a crossing the Rubicon moment, a true reformation.

This is what it means to be a Reformed Christian. We are not trusting in the seen, in the earthly and temporal, in human wisdom or power. Reformed Christians worship a great God who is in the words of the great hymn, immortal, invisible, God only wise, dwelling in inaccessible light, almighty and victorious, pure Father of light, the famous One, great beyond all the earth, who is beautiful, who changes not and is great in His faithfulness. Great is our God.

The view of God in our world and even in our churches today is far too low, too anemic, too bland, too boring, unworthy of much worship or praise.

God is glorified when we see and acknowledge His supremacy and sovereignty in our lives, in our salvation, in our marriages and families, in our church, in our work, our vocations and careers, in all our choices and decisions, in our world.

God is glorified when we begin to see and acknowledge that His glory really does fill the whole earth, starting with me and my corner of it.

We glorify God and reflect His glory by trusting His power and authority to work all things in our lives for good; by believing that He is alive and with us always, giving all of life meaning and purpose; by making all our choices in life in a way that show we value God more than anything in this world.

**Colossians 3:1-2** If then you have been raised with Christ, *seek the things that are above*, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2 *Set your minds on things that are above*, not on things that are on earth.

**Psalms 145:5** On the glorious splendor of your majesty, and on your wondrous works, I will meditate.

Cultivate an insatiable appetite for the majesty and splendor and wonder and beauty of God. Think about these things, spend time in His presence and His glory will begin to transform us and radiate from us. Then others might say of us as they did of the disciples, “they have been with Jesus.”

Before God sent Moses into service, He gave Him a glimpse of His glory in a burning bush. When He called Isaiah and Paul, He revealed His glory. A vision of God's glory is essential if we are going to be a transformed church with a transforming message for our community.

**But friends, let's face it, right now we don't see any bright lights or strange creatures flying around**, no smoke or earthquakes. But I know this, God is here. He is alive and He is personally present, and His glory fills this room.

God is glorified when we imitate the seraphim and offer free praise and worship to God. This corporate worship is profoundly important. We are gathered here to glorify the living God and it pleases Him and blesses us.

But not just in worship. We glorify God when our lives correspond with our worship, when we make the chief aim of all our actions His glory.

Because God cannot be seen directly by us, He manifests His real presence with us through tokens of His presence and His glory. For Isaiah it was a throne and a robe and a temple and seraphim and music and an earthquake.

For us it is Jesus Christ and His Holy Spirit and the manifestations of the fruit of the Spirit; His Holy Word, read and taught and preached; His Church on earth, the body of Christ, brothers and sisters, and His endless providences and grace in our lives every day.

Oh, the folly of living only for this world, for earthly and material things. What a fearful and fatal and tragic mistake it is to ignore the reality and glory of the kingdom of God. The glories of God and His heaven far exceed and outweigh all the glories of earth.

May our view of God grow larger and larger as we press in to a clearer vision of the glory of God and how He would have us reflect it and spread it in our world. May it change us.

**Prayer:** Holy Father, grant us a fresh glimpse of your life-changing glory, and make First Christian a place where your people know and experience and love you in all your glory.