26 May – 1June 2024

God: a glimpse behind the curtain

Isaiah 6: 1-8

**Isaiah’s Commission**

**6**In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord, high and exalted, seated on a throne; and the train of his robe filled the temple. **2**Above him were seraphim, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. **3**And they were calling to one another:

“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty;
    the whole earth is full of his glory.”

**4**At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke.

**5**“Woe to me!” I cried. “I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty.”

**6**Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. **7**With it he touched my mouth and said, “See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for.”

**8**Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?”

And I said, “Here am I. Send me!”

**Bible notes**

Isaiah’s vision emphasises the majesty of the Lord. The details suggest ‘the most holy place’ (‘holiest of holies’) within the Jerusalem Temple. The outstretched wings of two carved cherubim, overlaid with gold and together 10 metres wide, served as God’s throne. And cherubim were also embroidered into the great ‘curtain of blue and purple and crimson fabrics’ that hung there (2 Chronicles 3:10-14). At its dedication Solomon acknowledged, ‘the highest heaven cannot contain you, much less this house that I have built’. And yet God said of the house, ‘My name shall be there’ (1 Kings 8:27-30). In Isaiah’s vision, the Temple similarly cannot contain God, as the great curtain is put into perspective as only an intricate border at the bottom of the vastness of God’s robe. But heaven and earth meet there, and the prophet is called to shape the kingdom of earth as the kingdom of heaven. The Temple is inadequate, and the prophet is unworthy. But God chooses to forgive his sin and speak through him. The scene is reminiscent of Moses’ encounter at the burning bush. He too expressed fear and inadequacy in the presence of God. He was then sent to speak the word of the King of heaven to Pharaoh, one of the kings of the earth. God said to Moses, ‘I am who I am’. ‘The Lord’, who appeared also to Isaiah, is beyond our understanding and yet promises to be with us.

### ****Reflection****

Spend a few moments thinking about what stands out for you from the Bible reading. This idea may help.

Isaiah had a very specific aspect of God revealed to him. God was seen as high up on a throne, holy and powerful. Isaiah recognised God as someone far removed from his usual experience and was moved to acknowledge God’s glory. The encounter had a profound effect on Isaiah; in contrast to the God he had seen, he saw himself as weak, sinful, guilty. Isaiah experienced the mercy of God and responded with the promise of joyful service. How does our experience of God have an impact on the way we think, worship and behave?

**Questions for reflection**

*You may wish to use these questions and the picture to help you think about or discuss issues arising from this week’s Bible passage.*

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**Questions**

* What ‘wow’ moments have you experienced in your walk of faith?
* What worship activities or spaces help you to draw near to God?

## What opportunities are there to encounter God in your everyday life this week?Prayer

Adapt to your local context.

**A prayer for all ages together**

Leader:We thank you God for showing yourself to us.
Then invite individuals to say:

Thank you, that you are…[a word from the worship activity]

Leader:We thank you that you are Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
and you are with us today.
**Amen.**

 **A prayer to end the Bible study**

We praise you, God the Father,
life-giver and creator of all.
We praise you, God the Son,
Jesus Christ, our Lord.
We praise you, God the Holy Spirit,
guide and friend.
Surround us in your mystery,
and be with us this coming week.
**Amen.**