

Sermon Mark S. Aites  
**THE SECRET OF ISAIAH'S EFFECTIVENESS**  
(Illustrations, thoughts, from a number of sermons)

**TEXT: ISAIAH 6:1-13**

**INTRODUCTION:**

1. The year was 1963, and the place was Dallas, Texas.
2. Traveling to a luncheon, the motorcade of the late John F. Kennedy was heading into downtown.
3. The president was sitting in the back of an open convertible with his wife Jackie, and the then, Gov. and Mrs. John Connally.
4. Historically, many people have regarded Kennedy as one of the most popular presidents in the history of this country.
5. In 1962 he endured and came out well after the Cuban Missile Crises, and then negotiated a nuclear test ban treaty with the USSR.
6. Kennedy had written two popular books to that time, one of which, *Profiles In Courage*, won a Pulitzer Prize.
7. The newspapers began describing the Kennedy household and administration as "Camelot."
8. Granted, revelations since the time of his presidency have shown that some things were questionable about his administration, but the point is not about politics.
  - 1) The point is about stability, and a people with a confidence in the leadership.
  - 2) Too many at that time, it was a time of prosperity and blessings, with a confidence that allowed people to feel comfortable.
9. But then Kennedy was assassinated, bringing horror and shock to this nation.
10. Problems in Viet Nam were escalating, and the people were unsure of the prospect of Lyndon Johnson being the next president.
11. It was a situation of perceived blessings, and then crisis and disaster.
12. In the history of Israel, we find a similar case.
  - 1) Uzziah had been the king for some 52 years, to our standards a very long time for any leader of a country.
  - 2) He became king at the young age of 16, but proved to be a blessing to his nation.
  - 3) He was an extremely popular king, and his accomplishments were many. Under his leadership the nation of Israel had grown and known tremendous prosperity, peace and stability.
  - 3) **2 Chron. 26:16** *But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction: for he transgressed against the LORD his God, and went into the temple of the LORD to burn incense upon the altar of incense.*
    1. Despite the years of his great accomplishments, he became lifted up with pride and entered the temple of God.
    2. Only those of the tribe of Levi were permitted to enter the temple.
    3. Despite the effort of dozens of priests and the beckoning of the high priest, he wouldn't listen.
    4. As a result, he faced severe punishment, as God smote him with leprosy.
  - 4) Uzziah then spent the rest of his life isolated from the activities of his court, and his family, living the life of a lonely leper.
  - 5) The situation in the country went from one of perceived blessings to crisis.

- 6) Trouble began to emerge in the kingdom, external problems were rising as enemies were gathering to war against Israel, unrest was found in the streets, and an inexperienced prince named Jotham, but 25 years of age, took the throne.
11. With unrest in the nation, and people discouraged and wavering in confidence, how was Isaiah going to deal with his people?
12. It is hard for one to stand up for the Lord when he finds that he is uncertain with the future of a nation.
13. In order for Isaiah to tackle the ministry before him, God had to focus his attention and make him understand who really was reigning on the throne.
  - 1) The nation had looked to the throne of the various kings, and for decades to Uzziah.
  - 2) But there is one far above Uzziah, who Isaiah needed to focus on.
14. Against this setting, we turn to **Isa. 6** and read **6:1-8**.
15. There are four things from this text that we need to look at, to help us learn what empowered the prophet to carry on the Lord's work.

## **DISCUSSION:**

### **I. REVELATION.**

- A. Just when things seemed to be a time of despair, and the good king was no longer in the picture, the Lord revealed Himself to Isaiah in a vision.
  1. This vision was stunning, which led to the prophet being overwhelmed.
  2. The greatness of what was before him was unlike anything he had experienced before.
- B. In this vision the Lord was *high and lifted up*, seated upon a throne in great exaltation.
  1. His train or skirt was such that it filled the temple.
  2. Above Him were the Seraphim, lit. the "burning ones," or "fiery ones," or, "flame-like beings."
    - 1) Believed to be a special class of angels, their majestic wings covered their faces, perhaps to suggest the dazzling brightness of the glory of God.
    - 2) With their great wings they are pictured as carrying out the will of the Lord.
    - 3) They extol the virtue, holiness, and great glory of the Almighty and Everlasting God.
  3. They give, what might be described as, a chant of praise: *Holy, Holy, Holy is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory.*
  4. What transpires in this vision, in the cry of *Holy, Holy, Holy*, occurs only one other time in Scripture.
    - 1) It occurs in **Rev. 4:5-11**, where John saw in a vision the Lamb, or Christ, exalted.
    - 2) We should realize that both visions entail a vision of the Lord, who we recognize as Jesus Christ (preincarnate, and postcarnate).
    - 3) The apostle John reveals this to be the truth: **John 12:41** *These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory, and spake of him.*
  5. Isaiah, in this vision, was in the presence of the King of kings, and Lord of lords.
  6. He was able to see and realize who it was that really ruled on the throne; not an imperfect man, but deity, in all of His holiness and glory (**cf. 1 Tim. 6:13-16**).

## II. PROSTRATION.

**Isa. 6:5** *Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.*

- A. In this tremendous vision, reality sets in, as the prophet saw his own unworthiness, his sins glaring in the present of absolute purity and holiness.
- B. "The story is told of Arturo Toscanini, the master symphony conductor. He had given a masterful performance of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. The audience was alive that night. When the master laid down his baton the response was spontaneous. They rose to their feet and applauded and applauded. There was an encore and then another. The roses were brought out. The orchestra bowed. Toscanini bowed. Finally, Toscanini hung his tired body over the music stand, rapped his baton and said, "Gentlemen Gentlemen!" The orchestra members leaned forward to listen. Was he angry? They couldn't really tell. In a fiercely enunciated whisper he said, "Gentlemen, I am nothing." They sat there gasping at this genius of musical performance. Then he rapped the baton again and said, "Gentlemen! You are nothing." They had heard that for weeks at rehearsals. They sat there in silence before the great master. Then with a tone of adoration he said, "Ah, but Beethoven, he is everything . . . Everything! Everything!"
- C. In a like fashion, I am nothing. I am a sinful man redeemed by the blood of Christ, in humbleness preaching of the greatness of my Lord.
  - 1. With due respect, in truth, you are nothing. There is not a one here, who based upon their goodness, can compare with the one upon the throne of glory.
  - 2. Ah, but Jesus, He is everything.
- D. One writer I found, was talking about an occasion in his earlier life, when he was playing defense for a football team.
  - 1. While the offense was on the field, he said that he became board and found a lose thread on the pant leg of his uniform, and he began to pull it.
  - 2. He continued to pull that thread until the seam on his one leg came completely apart.
  - 3. He said, and I quote, I was "exposing "the real me" for everyone to see."
  - 4. He panicked big time and grabbed a roll of athletic tape, and taped his open pant leg to his real leg, and played the rest of the game with one leg covered in athletic tape.
  - 5. This was all done to prevent him from being exposed.
- E. When Isaiah found himself in the presence of the Lord, he was totally exposed.
  - 1. **Heb. 4:13** *Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.*
  - 2. When we are in the presence of deity, our lives are unraveled, and all of our sins and imperfections are exposed.
- F. John the Baptist understood this when he said of the coming Christ: *There cometh one mightier than I after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose.*
- G. Moses understood this also:

**Exod. 3:4-6** *And when the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him*

*out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I.*

**3:5** *And he said, Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.*

**3:6** *Moreover he said, I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God.*

H. Joshua understood this:

**Josh. 5:13-15** *And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and, behold, there stood a man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand: and Joshua went unto him, and said unto him, Art thou for us, or for our adversaries?*

**5:14** *And he said, Nay; but as captain of the host of the LORD am I now come. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said unto him, What saith my Lord unto his servant?*

**5:15** *And the captain of the LORD's host said unto Joshua, Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy. And Joshua did so.*

I. The apostle Peter understood this:

**Luke 5:8** *When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.*

### **III. PURIFICATION.**

A. When one realizes that he or she is not as great as they may think, and that their goodness is nothing compared to the goodness and holiness of God; and they further realize that they are lost in their sins, then they seek God's forgiveness.

B. **Isa. 6:5-7** *Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.*

**6:6** *Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar:*

**6:7** *And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged.*

C. We observe the confession with the contrite heart, *Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips...*

1. I am not sure that we understand the significance of the translations that use the word *undone*. Other translations use the term *ruined*.
2. It is a word that lit. means, "to cease, be cut down, destroy, or be brought to silence."
3. We note that Isaiah confessed the sin of his lips, and the angel brings the coal from the altar of the temple *and laid it upon his mouth*.
4. In the temple, there were actually two altars, one that was an altar of incense, and the other, the altar of sacrifice.
5. Although not specified, it would seem more likely that it was the altar of sacrifice, as Isaiah had confessed his sin, and God was extending pardon to him.
6. Not knowing what to expect, the prophet knew that he was worthy of death,

highlighted by the word *undone* or *ruined*, but instead he experienced the grace and mercy of God.

8. Christians today understand what it means to realize the depth of our sin, and to know that we don't deserve God's grace, but thanks to our Lord, He made it possible.

**Rom. 6:23** *For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

**1 John 3:1** *Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God:...*

- D. The story is told of Henry Clay, the once great statesman, who had amassed a serious debt, at that day approx. \$40,000. It weighed heavily upon him.
1. One day Clay learned that his debt had been anonymously paid.
  2. The once great Clay, who had been so formidable, and powerful in handling of himself in political affairs, now shook and wept, overwhelmed at the forgiveness of his debt.
  3. Can we really appreciate what it means to have our sins wiped clean by the blood of Christ?
- E. The apostle Paul understood this all too well:
- 1 Tim. 1:12-15** *And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry;*  
**1:13** *Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief.*  
**1:14** *And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.*  
**1:15** *This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.*

#### IV. CONSECRATION.

- A. **Isa. 6:8** *Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me.*
- B. A couple of years ago, Tim Forneris, a 22 year old groundskeeper gave Mark McGwire, a million dollar ball, saying "I think I have something that belongs to you."
1. McGwire in turn gave it to the Hall of Fame to display beside Ruth's and Marris' record breaking balls. Why?
  2. He said it didn't belong to him, it belonged to the world.
  3. Forneris and McGwire, both displayed the kind of attitude Christians should have about their salvation. We do not hoard our treasure, we share it with the world. (Fresh Illus.)
- C. Note that when the call went forth, that out of the depth of love and gratitude, Isaiah responded to that call.
1. The prophet knew the condition of his nation, and that they were lost like sheep without a shepherd.
  2. This was a difficult assignment, for he knew that he was going to be encountering

hearts that were stubborn and rebellious.

3. But he loved them, and wanted them to repent that God would forgive them too.

D. This kind of love reminds me of the apostle Paul:

**Rom. 9:1-3** *I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost,*

**9:2** *That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart.*

**9:3** *For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh.*

E. Can you see the beauty of what this text in Isaiah reveals?

1. The prophet wasn't humiliated by his experience, but was humbled.

2. You say, What is the difference?

3. Satan wants you humiliated so you feel unworthy to serve the Lord. He will beat you up with your mistakes, sins and indiscretions.

4. God wants you humbled so you can serve the Lord. He wants you to admit your sins, so He can forgive you and empower you to live differently.

F. What the church desperately needs are not just more people, but people that are truly changed, that are transformed or converted.

**Rom. 12:1-2** *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.*

**12:2** *And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*

1. We need people who are on fire for Christ. Christians who know and understand what it truly means to be converted to Christ.

2. To some, in becoming a Christian, it is simply done in an effort to, using a denominational phrase, "join the church." (As seen from their perspective.)

3. What is lacking is the realization of who God is, and what He is, and that before Him we are nothing, but sinners condemned and unclean.

4. But receiving the forgiveness of our sins, afforded to us in the blood of Christ, with a sense of indebtedness, we want others to know and experience what we have experienced.

## CONCLUSION:

1. I was reading some interesting statistics: Every ten seconds twenty-six people die in our world. Of these twenty-six people, two are Buddhist, four are Hindu, five are Moslem, eight are secularists, three are Protestant, and four are of the Christian religion. Every ten seconds, more than twenty individuals die without Christ.
2. It is a terribly sad reality. And it is sad when we see that the church is not serious about the situation; and more so that members of the body of Christ are having trouble even living as they should.
3. Where is the transformation? Where is the gratitude for the forgiveness of your sins?
4. I fear the church is not going to be what it needs to be, until people realize how they stand before God.
5. How we need Christians to step forward and say, *Here am I, send me.*

6. Hypothetically, you are standing where Isaiah did, in the presence of Almighty God; our Lord and Savior high and lifted up.
7. His presence is dazzling. He is absolutely pure and sinless. The Seraphim continuously active are praising Him for His holiness.
8. And then you consider your own life, how do you fair before Him?