

you smile and share God's love. And there was nothing Isaiah wanted to do more! He was a broken, forgiven volunteer. God changed his "Woe to me!" into "Send me! Send me!"

It's true that God hasn't called us to be prophets. There was only one Isaiah. But God does call every one of us into his service. Broken, forgiven volunteers. That's you! God wants to help you find ways to use your individual gifts to serve him and others. Need suggestions? I couldn't help but notice all the opportunities for service in our Evangel this week. Greeters on Sunday mornings, handbell players, landscape helpers, VBS teachers, soccer camp coaches, a host family for our summer workers, parade walkers and donations of candy. And that's just one week's announcements! I hope there's a voice inside you, like in Isaiah, that's saying—"Here I am! Send me!" God wants to use you. This is what a Christian is—a broken, forgiven volunteer.

But when I read off all those opportunities, I bet there was a part of you that wanted to roll your eyes or groan. That's called your sinful nature. When that's the case, we need to go back and think about who we are. If I'm not eager to serve God, maybe I don't understand the forgiveness Jesus won for me. And if I don't appreciate the forgiveness Jesus won for me, maybe I don't understand my own sin and what I deserve from God. And if I refuse to confess my sinfulness, I must not understand who God really is—holy, holy, holy! That's why every single day we need to be broken. We need to see ourselves for who we really are. So we can rejoice that we're forgiven. So we can be God's volunteers.

On a day like Trinity Sunday, it's easy to make God into just a distant theological discussion. What's God really like? A triangle? A clover? H₂O? But there's no part of God that's just theoretical. You can't talk about God without connecting him to you and your life right now. So what's God like? Instead of trying to picture what he looks like, remember what he's done. God is the One who saved you. God is the One who takes broken people and forgives them. And God is the One who is calling you right now to serve him. That's your God! As we remember today who God is—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—I want you also to remember who you are—broken, forgiven volunteers.

Isaiah 6:1-8
Pastor Nathan Nass

Holy Trinity Sunday
May 31, 2015

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple. ²Above him were seraphs, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. ³And they were calling to one another: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory." ⁴At 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." ⁶Then one of the seraphs flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. ⁷With it he touched my mouth and said, "See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for." ⁸Then 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!"

Broken, Forgiven Volunteers

So what's God really like? Well, it's Trinity Sunday. He's Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. But what does that really mean? Christians have made lots of attempts to explain the Trinity. The Trinity is like a clover. It's got three different leaves, yet there's still just one clover, just like Father, Son, and Holy Spirit make up one God. Or the Trinity is like a triangle. It has three sides, but it's just one triangle. Or the Trinity is like H₂O. There's water, ice, and vapor, but it's all the same substance. Except is God really a clover, a triangle, or water? Of course not! This is why that Athanasian Creed is so long! How do you explain God?

Today Isaiah tries to describe him for us. In one of the most remarkable sections of the Bible, Isaiah actually got to see God face-to-face. In 740 B.C.—exactly 2755 years ago—Isaiah says, "I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted." Those really are shocking words—"I saw the Lord!" As he called Isaiah to be his prophet, God let him see the real deal—what God is really like. Yet, it's still not easy to describe him. How can you put God into words? Isaiah tries. God's seated on his throne, high and exalted. His robes fill everything. There's smoke and shaking. But it's still hard to get a picture in your mind, isn't it? How do you describe God?

What Isaiah does describe are seraphs. Isaiah's the only one in the Bible to mention them. Seraphs are bright, burning creatures with six wings who hover around God's throne. They're angels! Somehow, we've gotten in our minds that angels are cute little boys and girls with tiny wings or grandmas watching over us. But that's not how God describes angels! This is what angels look like—powerful creatures ready to do God's work. And that's a good thing! Who would you rather have protecting you and your family? A cute

Precious Moments doll, a grandma with wings, or one of these glorious angels? I'll take God's version of angels.

And let's let God's angels describe God for us. They use just one word: "*Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty.*" Instead of describing God based on his appearance, they describe him based on one of his qualities. Of all the characteristics of God, this is the one the angels are most impressed with: God is holy. Absolutely perfect. Did you notice what the seraphs were doing? With two wings they covered their faces and with two wings they covered their feet. Even the glorious angels in heaven feel unworthy to stand in God's presence. He's that holy! When I was in high school, there was a fad for people to wear shirts that said, "Jesus is my homeboy." Did you ever see one? I think Jesus is a little more than that! "*Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty.*" That's how great God is!

And as Isaiah took it all in, he said, "Woe!" Not "Whoa!" as in, "This is really cool!" But "Woe to me!" as in, "I'm dead!" As Isaiah looked at God—holy, holy, holy—and he looked at those burning angels, there was only one conclusion that he could reach: "I am not like them!" "*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.*" Isaiah expected to die! God's greatness is meant to produce a reaction in us sinful people—"Woe!"

Because if God is "holy, holy, holy," what are you? You are not. I am not. We're sinners. We're broken. If you don't believe me, Isaiah's going to prove it to you. In the previous chapter, Isaiah described six "woes"—six reasons neither he nor the Israelites deserved to stand in God's presence. See if any of these still apply to you. "*Woe to you who add house to house and join field to field till no space is left*" (Isaiah 5:8). People were so concerned about accumulating wealth that they weren't concerned about God. Sound familiar? Broken! "*Woe to those who are heroes at drinking wine and champions at mixing drinks*" (Isaiah 5:22). People loved to party hard, and God wasn't impressed. Broken!

There's more! "*Woe to those who call evil good and good evil*" (Isaiah 5:20). Isn't that our world today? Those who stand up and call evil good are praised, while God's way is called evil. How many times have you justified your own sins? Broken! "*Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes and clever in their own sight*" (Isaiah 5:21). Isn't that a perfect description of us? Wise in our own eyes. Broken! And then you have Isaiah's own confession, "*Woe to me! ... For I am a man of unclean lips...*" How clean are your lips? Broken!

The question really isn't, "Who is God?" He makes that clear. He is Father, Son, and Spirit—holy, holy, holy! The question is whether you are willing to admit who you are. You're broken. I'm broken. The holy angels stand in God's presence with such humility that they cover their faces and feet with their wings. We traipse into God's presence—when we feel it's worth it—with a mix of arrogance and indifference. Broken! When Isaiah saw God's holiness and compared it to his own sin, he got it right: "*Woe to me! I am ruined!*"

And the next thing Isaiah knew, one of these burning seraphs was flying directly at him, with a hot coal in his hand. Can you imagine what must have been running through Isaiah's mind? "This is it! I'm dead. It's over." Except, this is what that angel did: He touched the coal to Isaiah's mouth and said, "*See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for.*" The angel doesn't deny that Isaiah had sinned. He doesn't say, "Don't worry about it, Isaiah. It's not a big deal." He says, "You are right, Isaiah. You are sinful. You are broken. But this is what God has done for you: He has taken away your sin!"

Isaiah must have been shocked. It didn't make sense! Why would this almighty God and his powerful angel do anything for sinful him? But this what God does. He takes broken people like you and me and forgives us. When God saw Isaiah's unclean lips, he sent his angel to touch his lips and forgive him. When God saw that all humankind was broken, he sent his own Son to die to forgive us. You heard the best description of that in our Gospel lesson today. Can you say it with me? "*For God so loved the world, that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish, but have eternal life*" (John 3:16).

Broken but forgiven. That's the best description of you and me! Both are true. Sinful? Yes! But forgiven? Yes! Whatever sin is nagging you, whatever sin you can't forget, you're forgiven. For this soon-to-be prophet of God, it was his lips. They were unclean. Always sinning. Maybe for you it's your mind. Those dirty sinful thoughts. Or your hands. Or your heart. Or another part of your body that you've used to sin against God. Today Jesus says to you, "*Your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for.*" Doesn't that sound good? Can you imagine Isaiah's wildly swinging emotions? Awe at God's glory. Guilt and fear at his sin. Then peace and joy. Broken, forgiven.

Then God finally spoke. He said from his throne, "*Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?*" Why does God say, "Who will go for us?" Why us? It's just like in the Garden of Eden when he said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness" (Genesis 1:26). Why would God say, "us?" Because God is an "us"—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—the Trinity! And what was Isaiah's answer? He reminds me of the preschoolers in our Little Lambs. When I ask a question, they don't just raise their hands. They move their whole bodies, jump up, and shout: "Me! Me! Pick me!" Could somebody possibly get that excited about serving God? Isaiah did! God said, "Whom can I send to do my work?" And Isaiah, almost giddy, shouted, "Here I am. Send me!"

Because if you realize you are broken but forgiven, there is one more thing you will want to be—a volunteer. We are broken, forgiven *volunteers*. God doesn't just want to save you. He wants to use you—every one of you. The truth is, God really doesn't need us to do his work. He could place food in the stomachs of the hungry, but he prefers to have you give it to them. He could zap people with God's Word, but he prefers to have you share it with your mouth. He could appear to those who are hurting or alone, but instead he lets