

Sunday 23rd January, 2022

Service for Swansea & Charlestown Presbyterian Church

Call to Worship

To whom will you compare me?
Or who is my equal?" says the Holy One.
Lift up your eyes and look to the heavens:
Who created all these? (Isaiah 40:25-26)



Song – Behold Our God ([YouTube video](#))

1. Who has held the oceans in his hands?
Who has numbered every grain of sand?
Kings and nations tremble at his voice
All creation rises to rejoice

Chorus

Behold our God, seated on his throne
Come, let us adore him
Behold our king, nothing can compare
Come, let us adore him

2. Who has given counsel to the Lord?
Who can question any of his words?
Who can teach, the one who knows all things?
Who can fathom all his wondrous deeds?

Chorus

Behold our God, seated on his throne
Come, let us adore him
Behold our king, nothing can compare
Come, let us adore him

3. Who has felt the nails upon his hands?
Bearing all the guilt of sinful man
God eternal, humbled to the grave
Jesus, Savior, risen now to reign

Chorus

Behold our God, seated on his throne
Come, let us adore him
Behold our king, nothing can compare
Come, let us adore him

Bridge (repeated)

You will reign forever
(Let Your glory fill the earth)

Final Chorus

Behold our God, seated on his throne
Come, let us adore him
Behold our king, nothing can compare
Come, let us adore
Behold our God, seated on his throne
Come, let us adore him
Behold our king, nothing can compare
Come, let us adore him

Bible Reading – Isaiah 6:1-7 (NIV)

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.”

Announcements – Sunday 23rd January 2022

Focus for the month – Rest and Relax. The puritan pastor Richard Baxter used to set aside 30 minutes a day to meditate on eternity. Why not try and set aside sometime during the summer holidays to think about our eternal rest in heaven with our Lord Jesus?

School Holidays. Our school children are still on holidays so that means the normal activities of the church will close down for the Summer School Holidays and will only start back after Australia Day 2022. There will be a basic Kids Church that will run each Sunday over that time.

Pandemic Prayers. As a gift for every regular attender of the church, we have published a book called **Prayers from our People during the Pandemic.** This is a collection of prayers that we sent around during 2020-21 as a part of our paper and interactive services. Please find the copy with your name on it and use it as an encouragement to pray.

Young Families Bible Study. We have a young families Bible study starting in Term 1. It will be held on Zoom each Wednesday night from 8-9pm. And once a month the families will meet at a park or house to catch up and pray together. Talk to Jon if you are interested.

Holidays. Taylors are away on leave. If you need any pastoral assistance please speak to Jon.

Vision Sunday – Sunday 30th January 2022. Each year we want to remind ourselves of why we do church and why we run certain activities within the Church. To do that we attempt to paint a vision of where we are going and what we hope to achieve. And we would encourage you to get involved in at least one aspect of our Churches work. A good way to do that would be to come to one or more of our Vision Sunday get togethers & see what our plans are and how you can be a part of those plans. This will most likely be run over Zoom and here's what it would look like:

12:00am	Vision for Kids work	(Suzie)
12:30pm	Vision for Mission	(Stephen)
2:30pm	Vision for men's ministry	(Stephen)
3:00pm	Vision for Small Groups	(Stephen)
3:30pm	Vision for Pastoral Care	(Jo)
4:00pm	Vision for Evangelism	(Stephen/Suzie)
4:30pm	Vision for Youth Work	(Jon)
5:00pm	Vision for Creation Care	(Stuart)



Song – Only a Holy God ([YouTube video](#))

1. Who else commands all the hosts of heaven?
Who else could make every king bow down?
Who else can whisper and darkness trembles?
Only a Holy God

2. What other beauty demands such praises?
What other splendour outshines the sun?
What other majesty rules with justice?
Only a Holy God

Chorus

Come and behold Him
The One and the Only
Cry out, sing holy
Forever a Holy God
Come and worship the Holy God

3. What other glory consumes like fire?
What other power can raise the dead?
What other name remains undefeated?
Only a Holy God

Chorus

Come and behold Him
The One and the Only
Cry out, sing holy
Forever a Holy God
Come and worship the Holy God

4. Who else could rescue me from my failing?
 Who else would offer His only Son?
 Who else invites me to call Him Father?
 Only a Holy God!
 Only my Holy God!

Chorus
 Come and behold Him
 The One and the Only
 Cry out, sing holy
 Forever a Holy God
 Come and worship the Holy God

Pastoral Prayer Points

“Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth. For I am God and there is no other.” (Isaiah 45:22).

Pray for Australians to look to Christ more than ever before — and find hope and salvation. Pray that God will work in the hearts of each State Premier to do His will.

Pray for Tonga: Pray for those effected by the recent volcanic eruption. Pray for emigrant believers to cling to the truth of God's word as they adapt to life in their host nations. Pray for freedom from the love of money among young adults tempted to seek riches abroad. Pray for hope and eternal purpose for youth turning to crime and drugs as solutions to boredom.

Pray for those in isolation: Pray for protection of those in unsafe homes, and peace for all.

Bible Reading – Isaiah 6:8-13 (NIV)

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!”

9 He said, “Go and tell this people:

“Be ever hearing, but never understanding;
 be ever seeing, but never perceiving.”

10

Make the heart of this people calloused;
 make their ears dull
 and close their eyes.^[a]

Otherwise they might see with their eyes,
 hear with their ears,
 understand with their hearts,
 and turn and be healed.”

11 Then I said, “For how long, Lord?”

And he answered:

“Until the cities lie ruined
 and without inhabitant,
 until the houses are left deserted
 and the fields ruined and ravaged,

12

until the Lord has sent everyone far away
 and the land is utterly forsaken.

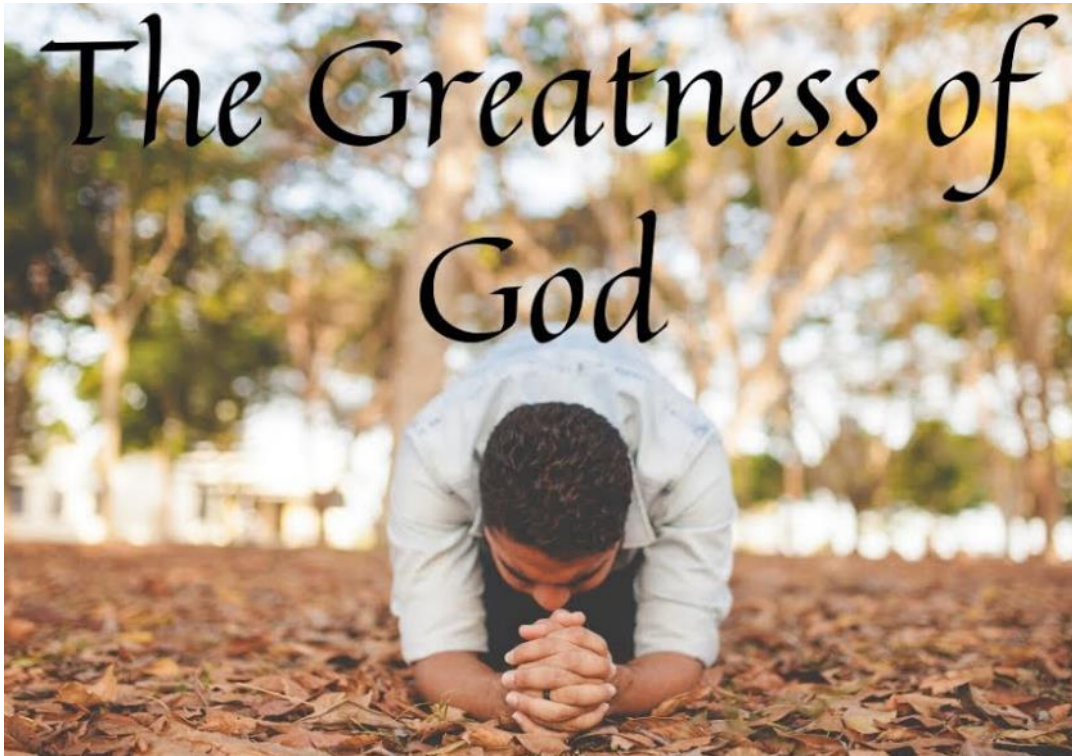
13

And though a tenth remains in the land,
 it will again be laid waste.

But as the terebinth and oak

leave stumps when they are cut down,
 so the holy seed will be the stump in the land.”

Sermon by Jon Brown



The Greatness of God (Isaiah 6)

One American writer called the times we live in, 'the Age of Disappointment.' It feels a bit like that doesn't it? Disappointment on a global level, the pandemic spreading. Disappointment in the church; less Australians are identifying as Christians, a minister drought, restrictions on gatherings. Disappointment in your own life. Maybe you've lost your job this year. You've found it really hard to concentrate at school. You're wondering about your career, are there going to be any jobs? Will I be able to travel? Will I be able to visit my family in other states, or countries? In the Age of Disappointment, it's easy to lose hope, isn't it?

And this is why we need to see Isaiah's vision. Isaiah lived in the Age of Disappointment too. There's nothing new under the sun. He was the son of Amoz. He was a prophet from Jerusalem. And he prophesied during the reigns of King Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah - all kings of Judah. This all happened around 750BC. The City of Jerusalem - God's city. Was in ruins. It was caused by bad leadership, hypocrisy, injustice. It's all there in chapters 1-5. The book starts out with Judah on trial. Chapter 1:2 says, "Listen, heavens, and pay attention earth, for the LORD has spoken, "I have raised these children and brought them up. But they've rebelled against me." And now they've gotta face God's anger through the Assyrian army destroying them. Check out 5:30 - "On that day they will roar over it like the roaring of the sea. When one looks at the land there will be darkness and distress. Light will be obscured by clouds."

Darkness. Despair. It's the Age of Disappointment. But when it's darkest, the light shines brightest. When all earthly hope disappears, the heavenly hope appears. And that's what happens to Isaiah in chapter 6. Notice how it starts in verse 1? "In the year that King

Uzziah died, I saw the Lord.” If Isaiah and Judah thought the year couldn’t get any worse, it just did. Uzziah had a long and prosperous reign. You can read about it in 2 Chronicles 26. He reigned from 791-740BC. And then he got leprosy and died. With Uzziah’s death, the question of the future would have been on everyone’s mind. What happens to the line of David? Isaiah must have been crushed. His dreams of a better world, gone. But it’s at the end of the line, that everything changes for Isaiah.

Isaiah gets a vision 3-D vision. He looks up. He looks within, he looks out. He sees God, he sees himself, he sees a world in need. He sees the deity, he sees depravity, he sees his duty. As we look at this passage together, my hope is that we encounter God in the same way as Isaiah did. And that we’re transformed in the same way Isaiah was transformed.

I. Look Up (vv. 1-4)

There’s debate over whether Isaiah had already been commissioned. Or if this was his commissioning. I reckon Isaiah had already been preaching and chapters 1-5 was his message. He was already converted here. This was a post-conversion experience. Something we all need. Maybe up until this point Isaiah was losing all hope. Maybe he had just heard the news about king Uzziah’s death. And he wanders into the temple in a state of despair. And everything he knew about God and himself is about to get deepened. And taken to another level. It’s about to go 3-D.

Notice in verse 1 - the earthly king had died. But Isaiah sees the heavenly King. At the point where all earthly hope had vanished, Isaiah sees heaven. He sees the Throne. High and lifted up. The throne above all thrones. The King of above all kings. The Sovereign Lord. The One who rules heaven and earth.

See the hem of his robe filling the temple. It’s on the hem of his robe! Meaning He is bigger than the Temple. We try and put God in a box. But He cannot be contained. Christ is bigger than the Presbyterian Church of Australia. His glory fills the earth. Where is God? He is too big to see. Our tiny finite minds can’t comprehend His infinite being.

See the seraphs - the burning ones, otherworldly creatures with six wings. See them overcome by His presence. See them covering their faces from the glory of the LORD, calling to one another, “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD God Almighty - the whole earth is full of his glory.”

This is a vision of God’s holiness isn’t it. God is all holy. But what does that mean? The psalmist in Psalm 145:17 puts it helpfully: “The Lord alone is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works”. When we say “God is holy” we are saying is that God is morally perfect. No other attribute is used more of God in the Scriptures, than that of His holiness. And yet strangely the people of God had forgotten this. The Israelites had domesticated God. They had invented a God who they thought they could control by ritual. And back in chapter 1, in verses 13-14 God says to the Israelites, “stop your offerings. Stop your meetings. I hate your meetings. I hate your assemblies.” Things had gotten pretty bad! They are

doing the rituals but repulsing God! We need to be careful we don't secretly invent a god like this. One who we domesticate by our religion. And at the same time think we don't need to do anything about our sin. The temptation in Isaiah's day was to look good without being good. It's the same today, isn't it?

Then we need this vision of God's holiness too. Let's look again at the seraph, they are covering their eyes! And they are sinless creatures! There's a hymn by Thomas Binney called *Eternal Light*. It's got a verse that goes:

The spirits that surround Thy throne, may bear the burning bliss; But that is surely theirs alone, since they have never, never known, a fallen world like this.

They are pure and yet they still have to cover their eyes before God! But Isaiah feels the need to do a lot more than cover his eyes. "Woe is me!" He screams in terror! "I'm ruined! I'm done for. I'm guilty. I'm unclean." Isaiah looks up. But as he looks up, he can't help looking within. And when he looks within, he doesn't like what he sees.

2. Look Within (vv. 5-6)

Isaiah sees God for who he really is, and then he sees himself for who he really is. Here is a fundamental truth: only when we know God for who he is can we really know ourselves. IF we don't know what the Truth is, how can we know the truth about ourselves. But the closer you get to the light the more you can see, right? The closer you get to God the more... hideous we appear. If we only compare ourselves to each other, we'll always find someone who's worse than us. But when you know the Holy God, all is revealed. But God doesn't want us to run from him in terror. He wants us to turn around and stop running. He wants us to be honest. He wants us to confess our sin. Like Isaiah:

"I'm a man of unclean lips and live among a people of unclean lips." He sees that's he's complicit in the people's hypocrisy. The "woe to you!" has become "woe is me!" Their evil is his evil. Their judgment is his judgment. It's like when you read Romans I, and Paul lists all the sins of the pagans. And you go, "Oh that's awful. Those pagans! Murder, deceit, malice, sexual immorality, homosexuality. And then in chapter two Paul turns to 'the religious' folks and says, "Therefore you who judge, whoever you are, are without excuse. For when you judge another, you condemn yourself. Because you do the same things!"

No one becomes a Christian without being humbled. Jesus is a God whom we can approach without pride and before whom we can humble ourselves without despair. Let's keep going. Check out verse 6. One of these seraphim flies over to me with a burning coal that he'd taken from the altar. And he touches my mouth and says, "Now that this has touched your lips, your iniquity is taken away. Your sin is atoned for." Isaiah had preached about this cleansing already. Chapter 1:25 - "though your sin be like scarlet I will make them white as snow." And now he sees how this is going to happen. Through a burning coal from the altar. Through painful purging. Through atonement. The priest on the Day of Atonement got a coal from the altar and took it into the holy place. The burning coal

comes from the place of sacrifice. Meaning the cleansing comes from the place where a substitute was offered for people's sins.

Isaiah is getting a preview of the cross. The place where sin is dealt with through painful judgment. Jesus Christ offered himself as the perfect sacrifice. He himself is the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Through the cross God gives us the cleaning we need. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Guilt will gag you. But forgiveness frees you. Guilt if not dealt with keeps us under its tyranny. But go to the cross. And see the power of Jesus' blood to wash you clean. Your sins are like scarlet - he makes us whiter than snow.

Because the problem within has been dealt with, Isaiah is free to look out and see the need of others. Now that he has experienced God's forgiveness, he is ready to offer it to others.

3. Look Out (vv. 8-13)

The Anglican Archbishop of Sydney, Kanishka Raffel converted from Buddhism to Christianity. And this is what he felt after experiencing God's grace in Jesus: "I found the love of Jesus so wonderful, I wanted other people to experience it. I didn't know words like mission. I would look at people in the street and say: do you know this?" And that's how Isaiah is feeling. The Lord asks, "Who should I send? Who will go for us?" And Isaiah says, "Here I am. Send me." Notice Isaiah's response shows he's been humbled. He doesn't go, "I'll go." But "send me." He knows he ain't got it in him to go on his own. He's come to the end of himself, and now God can use him. And as the old preacher said, "Man's extremity is God's opportunity." Isaiah is ready to be used. He's ready for the mission.

But what a strange mission it is, right? Check out verse 9: he's gonna preach up a storm but no one is gonna be feeling it. It's gonna fall on deaf ears. Success isn't guaranteed. Bums on seats aren't guaranteed. In fact it's gonna look like a big fat failure. There's gonna be disappointment.

At least the Lord is upfront with Isaiah. It's kind of God to make Isaiah's expectations line up with reality. God doesn't promise success in the world's eyes. Jesus said you're gonna face trouble in the world. That's what he told his disciples. So that when it happens, they don't go, "What! You never told me it's gonna be this hard!"

But just because people aren't gonna listen it doesn't mean it is a failure. It doesn't mean God's word isn't working. His word always accomplishes what he wants it to do. Falling on deaf ears is the effect. It's God's ultimate judgement.

And notice it's gonna get worse before it gets better. Check out verse 11, "Until when Lord? And he replies. Until cities lie in ruins, without inhabitants. It gonna get real bad! The land is gonna be desolate. The tree is gonna get lopped down.

But check out the end of verse 13 - there'll be a stump. The Stump kingdom. The glimmer of hope in the midst of despair. That's a prophecy of Jesus - the Christ. The Messiah.

Jesus, the one greater than Isaiah. Jesus who is himself the LORD - who Isaiah saw on the throne of heaven. Stepped off that throne. See him, when the Father said "Who will go?" Who will go to save this runaway world? The Son of God said, "Here I am, send me." And he came. See him - The offspring of David. The holy seed. The stump. See him preach to his own. And they didn't receive him. Their hearts became so hard that they had him killed. See him hanging on Roman cross. Jesus came to end the Age of Disappointment. And he did it by facing the ultimate disappointment - the cross. Death. Separation from God. So that you and I can be filled with hope. The hope of eternal life. The hope of the resurrection. The hope that his kingdom will one day fill the whole earth. That's the Christian's hope. This world will always be full of disappointment. Jesus is our only hope.

Let me finish with a challenge: The Austrian psychiatrist, Victor Frankl, observed that there is one final freedom which no human being ever loses completely when conscious, and that is the choice about how to respond to whatever circumstances he finds himself in.

You have seen what Isaiah saw. How are you going to respond to God's holiness? Let's respond with honesty. Confess our sins. Experience the cleansing through the cross. And say to God, "I'm ready. Here I am, send me."

Let me finish by praying these words from Psalm 51:12-13: "Restore unto me the joy of my salvation, and uphold me with your free Spirit. Then will I teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will be converted to you." Amen.

Song – Facing A Task Unfinished ([YouTube video](#))



1. Facing a task unfinished
that drives us to our knees
a need that, undiminished
rebukes our slothful ease
we who rejoice to know you
renew before your throne
the solemn pledge we owe you
to go and make you known

2. Where other lords beside you
hold their unhindered sway,
where forces that defied you
defy you still today,
with none to heed their crying
for life and love and light,
unnumbered souls are dying
and pass into the night.

3. We bear the torch that flaming
fell from the hands of those
who gave their lives proclaiming
that Jesus died and rose;
ours is the same commission,
the same glad message ours;
fired by the same ambition,
to you we yield our pow'rs.

4. O Father, who sustained them,
O Spirit, who inspired,
Savior, whose love constrained them
to toil with zeal untired,
from cowardice defend us,
from lethargy awake!
Forth on your errands send us
to labor for your sake.

Benediction:

18 And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. **19** Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, **20** teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen. (Matthew 28:18-20).