

Summer is here and while many take a vacation from school, our need for continuing education as Christians never goes on vacation. There's always something we can learn or re-learn about our God, especially when it comes to the teachings and truths of the Trinity.

The true God, the God of the Bible, the only God who got rid of our sins and defeated death for us – he is one God ... **Hear, O Israel; the Lord our God, the Lord is one.** And, at the same time, this one true God is also three persons ... **baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.**

How three can be one, or one can be three, is beyond our limited human understanding. Should that surprise us? This is the all-knowing, ever-present and almighty God we're talking about! All the other gods in this world were dreamed up by someone. But since the Triune God needs to reveal himself to us, he must be the right one.

So today, **Let's Meet the Trinity!** *"What is God like?" "What would it be like to meet God face to face?"* Great questions! Many think they have the answers. *"God ... hmm ... he's bigger than we are. You can't see him. He made things. Other than that, he's a lot like us. Whether we behave or not, he seems tolerant. He likes people, unless they get him upset, then look-out. He's got a sense of humor. We'll all get to meet God someday in heaven and have a big party."*

In today's lesson, Isaiah meets the Triune God. Let's see if his experience matches the average person's perception of God.

Like so many chapters in Isaiah, this one is loaded with important truths. The prophet tells us when he received this vision: **In the year that King Uzziah died,** that would be 740 BC. Isaiah's in Jerusalem, Judah's capital city, in the southern part of the Holy Land.

Isaiah reports something rare, extremely rare: **I saw the Lord.** Only saints (believers in heaven) and angels are permitted in the presence of the Lord. By listening to Isaiah's experience, we're no longer taking a poll of what people *"think"* God is like. We are hearing and seeing what the true and Triune God is *actually* like.

Isaiah sees God **sitting on a throne.** He should be. He's the supreme King of all. The throne is **high and exalted** which makes sense since God is higher and more exalted than anyone else.

That makes the place on earth that God is especially present isn't the mountains, or the wind, or the sunset or sunrise, or the lake ... as beautiful as all of those are. It's in his temple. In OT time, the place God met his people by way of his Word was at his Jerusalem temple. Nowadays, the *"temple"* where God meets his people is wherever 2 or 3 get together to hear his Word and celebrate his Sacraments.

For now, that's all we hear about God. Isaiah goes on to describe the reaction of those who are around God. **Above him stood the seraphim.** This is the only place the Bible mentions these types of angels. Did they have special qualities or superior rank? Not sure! What's important here is their actions rather than their rank.

Each had six wings. With two they covered their faces ... as if these powerful and holy ones wouldn't dare look at God's holiness. **With two they covered their feet** ... as if these powerful and holy ones wouldn't dare to tip toe on the same ground as the Most Holy God. **With two they flew** ... because they're speedy when they do God's will and benefit us.

Their occupation: **One called to another and said, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty** (*literally: Commander of Angel Armies*). Praising the God who is holy ... 3 times. Coincidence? Or, is it that we have ...

- a Holy Father, whose love is beyond our imagination,
- a Holy Son, whose sacrificial love is beyond our comprehension,
- a Holy Spirit, whose love surpasses our contemplation!

The sound of *their* voices made the **foundations of the thresholds shake, and the temple fill with smoke.** Sitting in your car at the airport observation lot on Layton as planes land and take off just a few hundred feet above you might come close to what Isaiah felt.

This sounds a lot different than meeting the good-natured, likeable, tolerant, jolly old God that most people think of, doesn't it? How would you respond to meeting him? The same as Isaiah? **"I am doomed! I am ruined!"** You and I would remember all those times ...

- We'd listened to the nasty things people say about our God and didn't say a thing to defend him.
- We'd think of all those times we giggled at jokes about God.
- We'd think of all those times we failed to thank God for blessings.
- We'd think of all those prayers that never crossed our lips.
- We'd think of all those evil and hateful thoughts on our minds.

Then we'd wonder: *"How will I not disintegrate in the presence of God's burning holiness?"*

As we **Meet the Trinity** with Isaiah, it's obvious that our lack of holiness deserves God's judgment.

But Isaiah survived to tell about it. And we will too. How? God is holy times three. His holiness hates sin. He separates himself from anything and everything that is sin.

But God found a way to destroy sin, while making sinful humans holy. His Son would live perfectly and his death would destroy our sins like disinfectant destroys bacteria. Isaiah would beautifully write all about what our suffering Savior's accomplished for us in chapter 53.

Isaiah's report continues: **Then one of the seraphim flew to me, carrying a glowing coal in his hand, which he had taken from the altar with tongs.** This was the giant altar stationed in the courtyard at the entrance of the temple. It was so huge the priests needed to climb steps to get to it. From morning until evening, for over a thousand years, millions and millions of animals were brought to be sacrificed. Each time the worshipers gathered they would say to themselves: *"I deserve that death because of my sin. But God has allowed me to sacrifice this substitute. One day, he'll send the ultimate sacrificial Substitute, once and for all, for my sins."*

Then the angel **touched my mouth with the coal and said, "Look, this has touched your lips, so your guilt**

is taken away, and your sin is forgiven." Isaiah's guilt and sin were standing in line to accuse him, but the Lord turned them away and removed them.

We too will survive a meeting with the true and Triune God just like Isaiah. Christ's body and blood was shed for us. The pain, death and damnation we deserved – he suffered. So now, when any of our wicked words, hurtful actions or hateful thoughts stand in line to accuse us, Jesus turns them away and says: *"Gone forever! Paid in full!"*

Isaiah's attention quickly returns to the King's throne: **Then I heard the Lord's voice, saying, "Whom shall I send? Who will go for us?" Then I said, "Here I am. Send me!"**

Two remarkable truths here. The first is a Trinity lesson. **Whom shall I send?** The true God is singular, one God. **Who will go for us?** The true God is also plural, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The three persons huddle up because they want somebody to speak for them. They could have sent the holy angels Isaiah saw. Instead, they're looking for sinners who have experienced God's forgiveness firsthand.

Which leads us to the second truth: Isaiah's willingness to respond without hesitation. The same person who just moments earlier felt *doomed and ruined* now expresses the courage to go and speak for God. Sounds a lot like Peter's triple denial at Jesus' trial, that later became a bold confession on Pentecost. Forgiveness worked this miracle inside Isaiah and Peter. Courage replaced fear. Willingness replaces unworthiness.

"Here I am. Send me!" is our attitude, too. Our Triune God has scrubbed us clean. No message is more important. No goal could be greater for you and me than inviting – your spouse, parents, kids, grandkids, friends, co-worker, neighbor – just one more time to hear the gospel.

"What is God like?" "What would it be like to meet God, face to face?" Is he the jolly old tolerant God that many have dreamed up for themselves? Hardly! He's holy time three! But he's so much more! He's the Trinity ... the Father sacrificing his Son, so the Holy Spirit can call your heart his home.