

Being Holy Different

I. Preamble & Prayer

A. Startling Discoveries

- John Hanning Speke stood on the river's edge and stared at the wall of water
- For nearly all the past year, of 1858, he had endeavored to get here
- For weeks he and his party slashed through African brush and forded deep rivers
- Natives had given chase bearing iron-headed spears
- Crocodiles and storks had kept their eyes on them
- But finally, after mile upon mile of jungle marching and grass plodding, they found the falls
- Only a Britisher could so clearly understate the sight—"We were well rewarded."
- Really?
- The roar of the waters, with thousands of passenger fish leaping at the falls
- Wasoga and Waganda fishermen taking post on all the rocks with rod and hook
- Hippotami and crocodiles lying sleepily in the water, in all made as interesting a picture one would want to see
- Speke could not leave—he sketched the scene over and over
- He dedicated an entire day to simply staring at the majesty of the falls at the upper Nile
- No region in England boasted any such sight—rarely do eyes fall on such a remote, often unseen image
- Speke's did and he was stunned by what he saw
- 14 years later and halfway around our globe called earth, Fred Dellenbaugh was equally impressed
- Only eighteen years old, Fred had joined Major Powell on his pioneering river voyage through the Grand Canyon
- Led by one-armed Powell, the explorers floated on leaky boats and faced waters no one to their knowledge had ever navigated successfully
- It's a wonder they survived
- It's every bit a wonder what they saw
- Dellenbaugh described the scene:

"My back being towards the fall I could not see it...Nearer and nearer came the angry tumult; the Major shouted "Back water!" There was a sudden dropping away of all support; then the mighty waters smote us. The boat rose to them well, but we were flying at twenty-five miles an hour and at every leap the breakers rolled over us. "Bail!" Shouted the Major,— "Bail for your lives!" And we dropped the oars to bail, though bailing was almost useless...The boat rolled and pitched like a ship in a tornado...canopies of foam poured over gigantic boulders, first on one side, then the other...If you will take a watch and count by it 90 seconds, you will probably have about the time we were in this chaos, though it seemed much longer to me. Then we were through."

- Young Dellenbaugh knew rapids—rivers and raging water were not new to him
- But something about this river was
- The sudden immensity, the stark intensity—stole away the oarsman's breath
- He knew rapids, but none quite like this
- Speke speechless; Dellenbaugh, drenched and awestruck
- Sounds like a man we know in our Bibles as Isaiah—a prophet of God
- We find Isaiah lying face-down on the temple floor
- Arms reaching to cover his head, and a muffled voice crying for mercy
- And like the explorers, he's observed more than just creation—he's seen the Creator
- He's seen God

B. Prayer – Lord, there's something about Isaiah's experience here that You want us to catch a glimpse of and experience today. Please teach us today what it means to *be holy different*. We live in a world today where differences in people matter, but to be different as God? You are holy, divine, eternal—teach us Holy Spirit we pray, we open ourselves to You. AMEN!

II. Message

A. It's all over, I am doomed...

- 750 years before Christ came, Isaiah lived
- Isaiah was Israel's version of a Senate chaplain or a court priest
 - a. His family, of the nobility class
 - b. His Hebrew, very refined
- Isaiah was both polished and professional
- And yes, successful
- But despite all these accolades, the day he saw God? Only one response felt appropriate—
- “It's all over, I am doomed...”
- What caused such a confession? What could stir such a reply?
- The answer is found in three words, repeated by the seraphim: “Holy, holy, holy.”
- Let's open our Bibles and read about it—
- **TEXT: Isaiah 6:1-5 NLT READ**

B. The year King Uzziah died

- Perhaps a decade or more of time had elapsed as King Uzziah had wasted away with God's stroke on him of leprosy (cf. 2 Ki.15:3)
- His son, Jotham, has ruled in his behalf
- And Isaiah remembers this day by the fact that a heavy cloud had just lifted, as one of the rare kings of David's throne in Judah, who had served the Lord, died
- Isaiah says, it was *then* that “I saw the Lord”

C. Holy, holy, holy

- Notice, on the one occasion seraphim appear in Scripture, and without stopping they proclaim a trilogy of the same word to God
- Repetition, in Hebrew conducts the work of a highlighter—providing emphasis
- God, proclaims the six-winged angels, is not holy, He is not holy, holy, He is *Holy, holy, holy*
- What other attribute is given such emphasis?
- No verses exist that declare God, wise, wise, wise or strong, strong, strong
- Only as Holy, holy, holy
- God's holiness commands headline, first page attention
- The adjective “holy” qualifies His name more than all others combined
- If we take the first and final songs in the Bible—they each magnify the holiness of God

D. Songs of Moses and the Lamb

- Israel had crossed the Red Sea, Moses led them in singing a song of deliverance to God
- **TEXT: Exodus 15:11**

“Who is like you among the gods, O Lord—glorious in holiness, awesome in splendor, performing great wonders?”

- In Revelation those who had been victorious over the Devil and the Beast power sang—
- **TEXT: Revelation 15:4**

“Who will not fear you, Lord, and glorify your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship before you, for your righteous deeds have been revealed.”

E. “Holy” in Hebrew

- When we unpack the word “holy” in Hebrew, we find the word *qadosh* which means “cut off or separate”
- Holiness then speaks about the “otherness” of God.
 - A. His total uniqueness
 - B. Everything regarding God is different from the world he has made
 - C. He is separate from His creation

F. Illustrating qadosh or holiness—God and you

- Take a paper airplane—what you are to a paper airplane, God is to you
- Let me make one and illustrate
- Take a sheet of paper and make one
- I am the creator and this is my creation
 - A. Challenging you to a spelling contest—who will win?
 - B. Dare it to race me around the block—who is faster?
 - C. Invite the paper airplane to a game of one-on-one basketball, first to 21—who will dominate?
- Well we should—the thing has no brain waves, no pulse!
- It exists only because I formed it and flies only because I throw it
- Go ahead and multiply the contrasts between you and the paper airplane by infinity—
- And you will begin to discover the disparity between God and us

- To whom can we compare God?

G. Compare God

- Let's examine some of David's and Isaiah's words here

OS – TEXT: Psalm 89:6 – “For who in all of heaven can compare with the Lord? What mightiest angel is anything like the Lord?”

OS – TEXT: Isaiah 40:18 – “To whom can you compare God? What image can you find to resemble him?”

- God Himself asks—

OS – TEXT: Isaiah 40:25 – “To whom will you compare me? Who is my equal? Asks the Holy One.”

- As though God need answer His own question—but He does

- TEXT: **Isaiah 46:9-11** READ

H. A Pursuit of God's counterpart is vain

- Try and pursue a counterpart to God and your pursuit will end in vain

- No one and nothing can compare to Him

A. No one advises Him

B. No one helps Him

C. No one surprises Him

OS – TEXT: Psalm 75:7 – “It is God alone who judges; he decides who will rise and who will fall.”

I. God is power

- You and me, we may have power, but God is power

- We are as the lightening bug, but God, He is lightening itself.

- Daniel, speaking to King Nebuchadnezzar said, “*God...had all wisdom and power.*” (2.20a)

- Take the universe we live in—unlike the potter who takes clay and shapes it

- God took nothing and formed our galaxy, our solar system, our planet

- He did not rely on material that pre-existed or was co-eternal

- Before creation our universe was not a dark space, the universe did not exist

J. Creator God

- Last Sabbath, one our church elders, Steve, spoke about God's color of salvation—how God forms white (light) from the three primary colors—amazing!

- Well, Isaiah would remind us too that God created the darkness too

OS – TEXT: Isaiah 45:7 – “*I am the one who creates the light and makes the darkness.*”

OS – TEXT: Revelation 4:11 – The twenty-four elders around God's throne proclaim these words—“*For you created all things, and they exist because you created what you pleased.*”

K. Christ, the Lord is the Creator

- And it may surprise some here, but Christ, in His pre-existent form created our universe

- He is the Lord who visited Isaiah in our passage today

- TEXT: **Colossians 1:15-17** READ

- Jesus Christ holds all creation together!

- If we trace God's power like a believing explorer upstream we will discover God's wisdom

- For God's omniscience (his all-knowing) governs His omnipotence (his all-powerful)

OS – TEXT: Job 9:4 – “*For God is so wise and so mighty. Who has ever challenged him successfully?*”

OS – TEXT: Job 36:5 – Elihu, Job's friend observed—“*God is mighty, but he does not despise anyone! He is mighty in both power and understanding.*”

III. Application

A. What we've learned about God

- Here's what we've learned about God—

A. His power is not mean-spirited or reckless

B. His knowledge about you is as complete as his knowledge is about the universe

C. The veils that block our vision do not block God's—

i. Our unspoken words are as if they were uttered to God

ii. Our unreleased thoughts are as though they were proclaimed to God

iii. Our unoccurred moments are as if they were already history for God

- David marveled, “I can never escape from your Spirit! I can never get away from your presence!” (Ps.139:7)

B. Question – How can we attain to being even close to being like God?

- So, can you see the “holy otherness” of God?

- You see, in Isaiah's encounter with the Lord we learn this—

1st – Those who see God most clearly are those who regard Him most highly - OS

- God is so holy that sinless seraphim cannot bear to look at the Lord

- They cover their faces with their wings
- Strange enough, they even cover their feet
- Why?
- Cause in Hebrew the word *feet* and the word for one's private parts is the same
- Please forgive the thought, but the confession of the angelic beings is that they are absolutely impotent in the presence of God
- There's no parading their sexuality—their regard is *completely about God*
- Isaiah could identify—when he sees the holiness of God, he isn't filled with boasting or resorted to personal swagger
- This is not a moment to start taking notes or drawing an image of what he sees
- Rather, he falls on his face and begs for mercy—"It's all over! I am doomed, (I am toast)
- Why does Isaiah say this?
- Because he says of himself—"I am a sinful man. I have filthy lips and I live among a people with filthy lips. Yet I have seen the King, the Lord of Heavens Armies."
- So the second lesson we learn is this—

2nd – The vision is about the Lord and not about Isaiah - OS

- Isaiah's search for humility is based on not seeking humility, but seeking the Lord
- One glimpse of the Lord and Isaiah claims his citizenship is among the infected and sin-diseased
- The term "unclean" is used to describe one being a leopard
- Put it down—God's holiness quiets all boasting
- Finally, what is the means by which we could even come close to covering the vast gap between us and God?
- The lesson is this—

3rd – God's mercy makes us holy - OS

- Watch!
- TEXT: **Isaiah 6:6,7** NLT READ
- Isaiah offers up no request
- He doesn't ask for grace
- He quite literally could have assumed mercy was impossible
- But I have news for you, no the Apostle Paul does
- TEXT: **2 Corinthians 3:7-11** NLT READ
- How about the glory of the new way, friend?
- God is soliciting spokespeople for the new way—"Whom should I send as a messenger to this people? Who will go for Us?"
- Isaiah, with heart and soul, shoots his hand up—"Here I am. Send me."
- With a glimpse of God's holiness—Isaiah felt compelled to speak
- It was as if he had discovered the source of a river or ridden like a cowboy a raging river down a canyon.
- It was as if he had seen what Moses saw—God Himself
- Although a glimpse, it was a God-glimpse for sure
- And he was different—and he liked being holy different

IV. Close

A. Prayer Song – Almighty God

Who filled the sky with radiant stars to glorify the night?
 Who knows the path that leads up to the dwelling place of light?
 Creator, Master, Holiness
 Sustainer of my soul
 He reigns in golden splendor
 Almighty God
 Almighty God

Who used His words to lay out the foundations of the earth?
 Who sent His Son so mankind born dead could have a second birth?
 Jehovah, Father, Mighty King
 Sustainer of my soul
 He reigns in golden splendor
 Almighty God
 Almighty God

He is excellent in power
All creation speaks His majesty
Jehovah, Father, Might King
Sustainer of my soul
He reigns in golden splendor
His heaven's filled with wonder
He purchased my forever
Almighty God
Almighty God