

# Seeing the Glory of Jesus Christ

Isaiah 6:1-13

*Halifax: 19 April 2009*

## **Introduction:**

Today we come to chapter 6 in the prophecy of Isaiah.

- This is one of the most loved chapters in the Bible because here the glory of God is revealed to Isaiah...

This is sometimes seen as his initial calling to minister...

- But this is not so—
  - We know this because we are told in Isaiah 6:1 when this vision occurred—
    - it was in the year that King Uzziah died...
  - Yet, if you look back at chapter one—at the very first verse where Isaiah is introduced to us,
    - You will see that Isaiah is said to have ministered in the days of Uzziah
      - Isa 1:1: “The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.”
    - As this vision in chapter 6 occurs in the year that King Uzziah died...
      - Isaiah must have already been ministering before this call came.
- We need to remember that God is not bound to only one call...
  - There are times when His servants need to have their call renewed...
  - In fact, we are in constant need of a renewal of our calling to serve God...
    - Each Lord’s Day, we here His promises and set out after Him in fresh service.
  - And there are times in our lives when His grace comes to us in a very powerful way to prepare us for a difficult calling.
    - Jesus initially called the twelve to follow Him and to be apostles,
      - but then after His resurrection, He renewed the call...
        - He gave them a fresh sight of His glory and His person and His word during the forty ministry when they came to understand everything about Him—
          - all about His cross and His resurrection for His people!
          - And then He called them to go forth with this good news and poured out His Spirit upon them to supply them with grace for the task...

- And it was to be a difficult task in a world that would be hostile to them and persecute them and kill them...
  - Though He had already called them, He renewed their call.
  - They were empowered for that calling.
- That is precisely what God did concerning Isaiah...
  - Isaiah had already been ministering for some time, but because he was given a difficult calling,
    - He was empowered for that calling by this vision of the glory of God.

## **I. Sometimes, God's calling is very difficult**

### **A. And Isaiah was given a very difficult task!**

1. He was to minister to people who would grow worse because of his ministry...
  - We see this in Isa 6:9-10:
    - Isa 6:9-10: "And He said, "Go, and tell this people: 'Keep on hearing, but do not understand; Keep on seeing, but do not perceive.' "Make the heart of this people dull, And their ears heavy, And shut their eyes; Lest they see with their eyes, And hear with their ears, And understand with their heart, And return and be healed.'"
  - a. Do you understand what Isaiah is being asked to do here?
    - 1) He is supposed to keep preaching to a people that are growing harder and harder under His ministry.
      - The more he preached to them the worse they got!
        - It was a horrible thing!
        - It was not a pleasant thing!
        - It must have seemed futile to Him.
    - 2) The LORD is not telling Isaiah that it is to be his intention to harden them...
      - He is not telling him to be as obnoxious as possible so that everyone will hate him...
      - Not at all—
        - He is telling him rather that this hardening will be the effect of His ministry among them.
        - This was also the effect of Jesus' ministry and the affect of Paul's ministry.
    - 3) Isaiah was to make the message as plain and clear as he could...
      - He was to preach it with earnestness and urgency...
      - But because it was so plain it made them worse.

- b. Do you see how this is so?
- 1) If you hear the Word plainly presented to you, you have more to reject, more to resist, more to turn away from...
    - You will have to answer for the opportunity God gave you and that you rejected...
    - In Luke 12, Jesus said
      - Luke 12:47-48: "And that servant who knew his master's will, and did not prepare himself or do according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he who did not know, yet committed things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten with few. For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more.
  - 2) This is why you Covenant children are so often warned—and all your church members...
    - You sit under the ministry of the word—
      - And if it never gets to you—if it never reaches you so that you repent and turn to the Lord...
      - If you just go on through the motions of things,
        - It will be all the worse for you to have been brought so near.
        - It would have been better for you to never have heard.
- c. Surely Isaiah must have been tempted to give up his ministry when he saw how it was making the hearers worse...
- But the LORD tells Him, in this renewal of his calling, to keep on at it!
    - To keep on hardening these people and keep on making them worse and worse!
  - We are not expressly told that Isaiah was discouraged at this time, but it is hard to believe that he was not!
    - He was a young, compassionate prophet who cared for the people he ministered to and who wanted them to hear and respond to the Word...
      - He preached and preached and preached, but the nation kept getting worse and worse...
    - When this prophecy comes, King Uzziah had just died...
      - He was a godly king,
        - but even he had disappointed the godly...
          - He is the king who had presumed to go into the temple to burn incense—something only the priest was supposed to do...

- and God had stuck him with leprosy so that he spent the rest of his days excluded from the public worship of God!
- Now his son Jotham was to reign...
  - And while Jotham himself was faithful,
    - the people were less restrained than they had been under his father...
    - In this way, the death of Uzziah was a blow to Isaiah...
      - Wickedness was increasing.

TRANS> Isaiah naturally asks how long he has to keep this ministry going!

2. And the Lord tells him that he is to keep doing this until God's chastisement has nearly wiped out the whole nation.
  - Look at what it says in Isa 6:11-13:
    - Isa 6:11-13: Then I said, "Lord, how long?" And He answered: "Until the cities are laid waste and without inhabitant, The houses are without a man, The land is utterly desolate, The LORD has removed men far away, And the forsaken places are many in the midst of the land. But yet a tenth will be in it, And will return and be for consuming, As a terebinth tree or as an oak, Whose stump remains when it is cut down. So the holy seed shall be its stump."
  - This speaks of a very heavy destruction...
    - Not just cities will be destroyed—
      - but all the houses without inhabitants!
    - The nation is to be reduced to only a tenth...
    - Ah yes, this was a great grace indeed,
      - but these were all supposed to be God's people and 90% of them were rejecting the message of grace that was coming to them.
      - God tells him that there will be life—and this is marvellous news...
        - but the life will almost be impossible to discern, buried in stump.
  - Note well that the LORD Himself is the agent of this chastisement...
    - He is the one who is said to "remove men far away." and He is the one who forsakes many places.
    - Isaiah has to keep on ministering as God's judgement comes more and more heavily upon these people...

- He is to plead with them even though his pleading will make them worse and subject to greater and greater judgement...
- Isaiah will even have to prophesy of these judgements—to be the herald of them—to deaf ears.
- What a difficult ministry for the young prophet!
  - He must keep on going and going and going until the whole nation is ruined!
  - He must endure all the mocking and the persecutions that would come along with their rejection of his ministry...

TRANS> This was the difficult calling that God gave to Isaiah...

- If you are a Christian,

B. There are many things God calls you to do that you will find to be difficult.

1. They can be difficult just because they are...

a. By that I mean that they are not difficult because you are stubborn or filled with sinful passions—

- but because you are called to suffer for Christ...

b. Jesus Himself had to do things that were very difficult—

- He too had to minister to people that were being hardened—and He wept because of it...
- He had to bear poverty and rejection and dishonour...
- But most of all, He had to go to the cross... and bear the wrath of God.
  - His difficulty with the cross did not arise because of any wrong thinking about it or inordinate lust in Him...
    - It arose because of the nature of the things itself...
    - To bear the wrath and curse of God was something that it was right for Him to despise...
      - It would have been wrong if He had not despised the shame of it...

c. Some of you may be called to bear trials for Jesus Christ...

- They may come in ways that are most difficult—
  - You may be called to bear with a serious illness, or with severe pain...
  - You may be called to bear with rude and ungodly relatives...
  - You may be called to bear poverty...
  - You may be called to bear a difficult marriage...
  - You may be given a slow and difficult ministry...

- You will have to bear various forms of persecution for Christ...
- Such things are difficult in themselves—not because there is something wrong in you...
  - But how God is glorified when you bear these patiently for Him!
    - Look at these as opportunities to show the LORD how much you love Him!
      - Is that not what Job’s sufferings were all about?
  - And not only that, but know that with such trials, the LORD always brings His grace in a fresh way...as you bear them for Him!
    - Through your sufferings, you come to know Him as you have never known Him before...
      - Is that not what happened to Job?
      - Is that not what happened with Isaiah?
        - He had already begun his ministry when God showed Him His glory in this vision...

TRANS> But let me add that sometimes the difficulty we have with God’s calling is indeed because of wrong in us...

2. His call can be difficult because of our sinful desires that go contrary to God’s call.
  - a. For example,
    - God calls you to sexual purity...
      - But if you are burning with passion because sinful lusts are inflamed in you, it can become a great difficulty for you to fight this sin.
    - God calls you tithe—and He calls you to be generous...
      - but if you are full of self-pity and greed, this call can be very difficult for you to bear.
    - God calls you to worship Him with joyfulness and to pray with fervency,
      - but if you have grown cold, these things may seem mundane to you...
      - You must see to it that you keep the fires of your passion of Jesus Christ alive!
  - b. There are so many sinful things in you that can take you away from God’s calling...
    - 1) God calls you to witness, but what if you are full of doubts?

- 2) God calls you to go to your brother and be reconciled with him but what if you are full of malice and cannot speak peace to him?
- 3) God calls you to patience in your trials, but what if you are full of bitterness because the LORD has shown you hard things and you have not responded to Him properly in the past?
- 4) God calls you to break off an ungodly relationship, but what if you are enflamed and you are lonely?
- 5) God calls you to stand up for His truth, but what if you are full of fear about how people will respond to you?

TRANS> Make no mistake,

- Whenever God calls you to something difficult,
  - when He gives you things that are hard to do...
    - It can wear you down!
    - How weary and discouraged you can grow in His service!
      - I will not lie to you about that...
      - I will stand here and tell you that God's service is always easy...
      - It is not.
- But I want to tell you what your LORD does for those He loves when He calls them to hard things!
  - You can be sure of it—
    - If you go forth to do His will, no matter how hard it is,
      - He will reveal His glory to you like you have never seen it before!
      - Your eyes will be opened so that at the end of it all,
        - you will say with Job—
          - “Before I heard about you, but now I see you with my eyes!”
    - Perhaps you will remember what I have told you before about this...
      - Whenever you see a truck pulling up to your life that is full of hard things,
        - know that there is another truck full of grace to bear those trials that will come with it!
        - God will show you Himself to prepare you for the trial and to keep you going in it.
  - This is what God did for Isaiah...
    - It was this second calling to him that came to him right when he needed it—

- He was supercharged with a fresh view of the glory of God and told to keep on with His ministry.
- Isaiah needed a fresh view of the glory of God to keep him going through the hard calling that he had been given...
  - And you also need the same!
    - Let's see what he showed to Isaiah!

TRANS> Yes, the LORD sends hard things for you to do sometimes...

## **II. But the LORD shows you His glory**

### **A. See what He showed Isaiah about Himself! (Isaiah 6:1-4)**

#### **1. First, He showed Him His endless reign...**

- In verse 6:1, Isaiah says:
  - Isa 6:1: In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the LORD, sitting on a throne.”
- a. King Uzziah had just died, but Isaiah sees the LORD sitting on His throne!
  - The Lord has been there through all the ages and there He will remain...
  - Earthly kings will come and earthly kings will go, but he will remain...
  - He was reigning when Egypt rose and fell—when Assyrian and Babylon and Rome rose and fell—he reigns forever and ever!
- b. The one who calls you to do hard things for Him is not going anywhere!
  - But that trial He calls you to bear for Him is only for a moment!
  - That sickness, that ministry, that difficulty—
    - it will be over in no time—
      - Yes, let it be for 60 years as with Isaiah—it is nothing compared to the One who reigns eternally!

TRANS> And not only does He have an endless reign,

#### **2. He also has an exalted reign—He rules over all...**

- See how verse 1 goes on to say...
  - Isa 6:1: In the ear that King Uzziah died, I saw the LORD, sitting on a throne, high and lifted up and the train of his robe filled the temple.
- a. The commentators ask funny questions sometimes—
  - Is it the throne or is it the LORD that is high and lifted up?
  - Of course it is both!



- It is the LORD on His throne that is high and lifted up!
  - His throne is over all!
  - There is no authority to compare with His authority!
- b. Earthly kings can look so mighty—Pilate tells Jesus, “don’t you know that I have the power to release you?”
- and Jesus says, “you have no power at all but what is given to you from above.”
  - That is always true—
    - Is there a difficult husband? a difficult father? a difficult government?
      - They have their power and authority from God...
      - None can reign but by Him.
  - Did Joseph’s brothers take dominion over him to sell him as a slave to Egypt?
    - They meant it for evil—they surely did—but all the while Joseph knew that the LORD reigns over all and that He meant it for good.
  - What is that sinful passion that is calling you to look at uncleanness on the internet?
    - What authority does it have compared to the LORD of glory?
    - Will you defile yourself to obey that lust when the LORD is on His throne, high and lifted up?
      - I tell you, if you see Him in His exaltation, you won’t even think about obeying that lust!
      - You will say, who and what are you to tell me to do this thing?
- c. What comfort there is to know that God’s kingdom rules over all...
- that no lord or master or ruler can make a peep but by Him...
    - This is reality and when God gives us hard things, He shows us the reality of who He is as the one who rules over all

TRANS> and not only does He have an endless reign and an exalted reign...

### 3. He also has burning attendants

- Isa 6:2: Above it (the throne) stood seraphim; each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew.
- a. What glorious creatures these are!
- The word Seraphim means “burning ones.”

- If you were to see these creatures you would be struck with terror and awe.
  - They are more glorious than anything on earth...
    - It would not come to your mind to try to resist them or cross them!
- b. But look at them before our LORD!
- They are burning with glory, yet before Him they cover their faces with shame...
    - Before the one toward whom we are so brazen, these great creatures are meek and retiring!
    - How blind we are to the great glory of God!
      - If we could just see it, how different we would be!
  - See them next to his throne with their wings—ready to move at His least command...
    - having no desire in all their being but the desire to please Him...
      - not as a burden, but as a delight because they are enraptured with His glory and splendour!
      - You will not hear a question raised from them...
        - no complaint about what the LORD has asked them to do!
        - no hesitation in them
          - Such comes only the fallen sons of Adam who are blind to the glory of the LORD who hung the stars.
          - How it must baffle these creatures who are so near to Him.
          - How shocking it must ever be to them to see our rebellion.
    - Can you imagine these creatures being afraid to do His will—afraid of what might happen to them if they did?
      - I tell you,
        - their only fear as those who are continually before Him is Him!
      - It is only us in our blindness that are filled with petty fears—all because we have lost sight of His glory.
        - What else could explain our hesitation to obey Him?

TRANS> But listen—not only is there something to **see** of His glory—

- There is also something to **hear**.
- These creatures also have something to say about the LORD...

- to say with voices so powerful that the very posts and lintels of the temple shake when each speaks...
  - a voice like no voice on earth...
  - the voice of these who cover their faces before the glory of Him who sits on the throne!
  
- 4. Hear how they praise Him for His holiness...
  - Isa 6:3: And one cried to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts;
    - a. In Hebrew, it is customary to repeat a word for emphasis two times—
      - for example, in 2 Kings 25:15, pure gold is simply “gold gold” and in Gen 14:10, many tar pits are simply “pits pits.”
        - But here is the only time that we have a word repeated three times for emphasis!
    - b. I can tell you something about what this holiness is...
      - Holiness is that about God which makes Him God—it is His separateness and glorious distinctiveness from everything else...
        - It is His purity and exaltedness that surpasses those dim rays of purity and greatness that we see in this world...
        - It is a purity so great that when that which is not pure comes before Him,
          - it is enveloped in a fiery inferno...
    - c. I can tell you something about what holiness is—but the best thing about holiness is that there is so much I can't tell you about it...
      - It defies our understanding—it is transcendence! It is mystery! It is the mysterium tremendum...
        - That which leaves us in awe and silence—feeling very small and undone.
        - Holiness is God's surpassing everything...
          - His surpassing excellence and purity and majesty...
          - Everything about Him is holy...
            - He has a holy love and a holy wrath...
            - a holy justice and a holy mercy...
            - a holy power and a holy compassion...
            - a holy law and holy ordinances...
              - Everything about Him is holy.

TRANS> And after telling us of His holiness, the Seraphim round off their praises with these words:

5. The whole earth is full of His glory...
  - a. This is a wonderful thing, for it means that this great and awesome God, while hidden as one who is far beyond our understanding and comprehension...
    - nevertheless has deigned to show forth His glory in the earth!
    - He is a God who reveals Himself to His creatures so they can know Him and understand Him!
  - b. His glory is seen in the things that He has made...
    - The stars, that galaxies, our bodies—so complex, so amazing...
      - God has made Himself known... in these...
      - And not only that, but He constantly makes Himself known through His works...
        - His provision for us, His working in history, and His mighty acts.

TRANS> It is wonderful that He shows us His glory...

- Here in Isaiah 6, we see how He showed His glory to Isaiah...
  - But...

B. He has shown us even more of His glory than this!

1. According to John, it was Christ that Isaiah saw in this vision...
  - a. John 12:41 says:
    - “These things Isaiah said when he saw His glory and spoke of Him.”
  - b. Christ is the Word of God, and all the appearances of God in the Old Testament are appearances of Christ...
    - This is our Saviour in His glory, seated upon His throne!
2. Now, in these New Testament times, we have an even fuller revelation
  - a. Jesus said that John the Baptist was the greatest of all the prophets...
    - He was shown more than all the rest...
      - But He goes on to say that one who is least in the kingdom that he is establishing is greater than John.
    - The revelation we now have is even greater than what Isaiah had!
      - If only we would benefit from it more!

- If only we would take it in—regard it—grasp the glory that is now revealed!
  - In time past, God spoke by visions and such, but in these last days, He has spoken by His Son—the One who made the world—the One Isaiah saw on His mighty throne!
  
- b. Now Jesus has come in the flesh to reveal God’s glory to us...
  - This is the ultimate revelation of His glory... so amazing that it baffles us and even startles us...
    - This one, high and lifted up on the throne with seraphim covering their faces before Him,
      - took flesh and came to earth...
  
- c. And in our flesh, He lived among us and filled out for us what holiness is even more than ever!
  - And this He did by the ultimate revelation of God to all His creatures in heaven and earth...
    - He—this glorious one who reigns high over all in holiness forever and ever—went to the cross.
  
  - Buy this act, we see depths of holy love that elude us—we can’t even come near to them!
    - That such a one should come and die and bear shame for His creatures to redeem them!
    - And we see His holy justice and judgement and wrath revealed...
      - That to accept sinners into His company, nothing would do to atone for their sin but the suffering of this glorious king who is over all.
      - We must not allow ourselves to cheapen His inapproachable holiness by the familiarity of the cross...
        - rather, the cross ought to exalt this holiness all the more for us!
        - It ought to expand it out a million times more and add to the greatness of what He is and the otherness and the perfection and the depth and the height of it all.

TRANS> My what glory is revealed in Him!

- Words fail us—we see but the edges of His ways—

### **III. Seeing His glory prepares you for His calling**

A. It brings you to an end of yourself (Isa 6:5)

- Isa 6:5: So I said: "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 my eyes have seen the King, The LORD of hosts."

1. You see that you are nothing—nothing but uncleanness!

- We are all sinners!
  - a. Isaiah feels that he is coming apart at the seams—he is undone...
    - This holy prophet realises that he is not every holy!
    - Even the lips he uses to speak of His Lord are defiled and unclean
      - He feels that he must die before this holy one.
      - How much more ought we to see this who have the revelation of the cross?
  - b. Oh brothers and sisters how we need to see Him—how we need to see King Jesus so that we will be put in our place before Him...
    - under Him—way under Him—adoring His majesty—lost in awe of Him!
      - We need to die when we see that He is the life—even the life of all!
      - He is Jehovah, the self-existing one.
    - We need to see that we are nothing without Him...
      - nothing but what He makes us to be!
      - Not only because we are creatures who have no life in ourselves...
        - but even more because we are sinful creatures!

TRANS> When we see Him in His glory—if only we would see Him in His glory...

2. All the selfish, proud thoughts would vanish!

- a. Don't you see—take those foolish skeptical questions that we ask...
  - Why doesn't God save more people?
    - Why did God allow the first fall?
    - Why do I have to suffer?
    - Isn't it selfish for God to seek His own glory?
    - Why does God forbid fornication?
  - We are so swollen up with pride when we ask such things—
    - You need to be on your face before Him instead!

- You don't ask those questions when you are on your face before His holy majesty!
  - That is where you will be when you see His glory as Isaiah did.
  - We need to be poor in spirit—we need to be mourning over our condition in sin—not asking questions!
    - Job put his hand over his mouth and stopped asking questions...
      - That is what you will do also if you see His glory!
- b. When you see what you are before Him, you are not so concerned to ask Him what He is doing as you are to find out what you must do.
- You become desperate for grace!
    - You want mercy and help—you not there to question Him!
- B. And you see how He assures you of His cleansing and grace for you (Isa 6:6-7)
- Isa 6:6-7: Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a live coal which he had taken with the tongs from the altar. And he touched my mouth with it, and said: "Behold, this has touched your lips; Your iniquity is taken away, And your sin purged."
1. Here is God's gracious promise to the one who is broken and humbled before Him of His own cleansing—
    - It is the cleansing that God Himself provides...
    - It is the cleansing that purifies and sets us free!
    - It is the cleansing that comes through Jesus Christ Himself...
  2. This is the difference between the true religion and all others...
    - God comes to us and He does not find us holy, but He finds us all unclean and unfit for communion with Him...
      - But in His grace, He Himself undertakes to purify us...
      - And then He tells us to assure us that we are clean...
    - The symbol itself did not purify Isaiah,
      - But in the symbol God gave assurance to Isaiah that he was not cleansed because He Himself had cleansed Him...
      - So our LORD does in baptism...
  3. What comfort this brings to us...
    - Seeing Him, we see that we are completely undone...
      - But then He comes and purifies us as only He can!

- What a gracious God!
- What a glorious God!
- What a holy God!

TRANS> And having the assurance of His cleansing, we are ready to go forth to do His will...

C. This speeds you forth with cheerfulness to do His will

- Isa 6:8: Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying: "Whom shall I send, And who will go for Us?" Then I said, "Here am I! Send me."

1. Is that you my friend?

- Are you prepared to do what He calls you do—not matter what it may be?
- Are you in touch with reality?
- Remember, this that Isaiah saw—this is reality!
- Jesus Christ reigning high over all in inapproachable holiness—yet cleansing those who come to Him...
  - This is reality...
    - Your fears are unfounded
    - Your bitterness is unfounded
    - Your doubts are unfounded
    - Your hesitation is unfounded
    - Your reluctance is unfounded
  - It has no place at all when you see Him as He is!

2. Not that you are as one who has lost all sensitivity...

- Not that you no longer feel the pain of hard things— or care about those who suffer...
  - It is just that before the throne of His glory they all become so very small that they do not keep you from doing His will!
  - You take your place **under** Him where you belong and lose yourself totally in His service.
- But in a certain way,
  - all the problems and all the difficulties become even more important because you realise that how you handle them is all tied to the glory of God.
  - You realise that our problem of sin, which next to the glory and majesty of God is so small,
    - it yet something His glory is demonstrated upon...



- It is something that takes on a whole lot more significance, not independently of Him, but because of Him.
  - You don't become one who doesn't care about problems,
    - but one who sees that problems and hard things are opportunities for you to honour God and to know God and to show your love for Him and for others...
    - that are all tied to Him and have meaning in Him.
  - So far from becoming cold and aloof as those who have a pretended and put on piety,
    - you become all the more engaged, all the more compassionate and concerned, all the more serious and all the more joyful.
3. You do not lose all sensitivity, but you become one who has a proper estimate of the value of the glory of God!
- You become one who delights in His glory through everything in your life...
  - You see all that is in your life as given to you that you might know Him and that you might see His glory and honour Him in His glory and show forth His glory to others.
  - That is what Isaiah did...
    - He did not become cold and bitter toward the people who grew hardened, but all the more zealous and compassionate toward them.
    - He ministered faithfully for over sixty years because all the while He was sustained by the glory of God.