

Nov 17/24 – Leader’s Guide - Isaiah 6:1-8 “Behold the Lord”

Read Isaiah 6:1-8; 2 Chronicles 26: 1-15

1. In the year King Uzziah died... Review together the state of affairs in Israel under the reign of Uzziah. What would be the personal and national “mood” in light of Uzziah’s death?

Over his 52 year reign Uzziah had successfully repelled the enemies of Israel, restored Jerusalem, built military outposts and as an inventor fortified them with catapults and turreted crossbows. He dug cisterns in the desert expanding the nations agriculture. This was a time of incredible peace and prosperity.

There were storm clouds brewing. The Assyrian empire was rising to power conquering nations all around. Uzziah’s strength had been a deterrent, but now?

There would likely be a mixture of sorrow, grief, fear, worry and uncertainty.

2. What does Isaiah invite us to do when such a mixture of emotions borne of current events come to the surface for us?

Isaiah takes that mixture into the temple, he goes to worship, to seek the presence of God.

3. Read Luke 10:38-42. What is the only necessary thing? What does that tell us about what is central to the heart of God?

To seek the presence, to rest in the presence.

That this is a desire that God longs to meet.

To reveal himself to us, to make real to us an aspect of his character we need to see to face whatever life brings our way, to empower us to step forward in his ways, to equip us to reflect his nature for the sake of others.

4. What does Isaiah's vision reveal about the nature and character of God?

God is on His throne, high and lifted up. God is sovereign over all things there is nothing that is beyond him, nothing can thwart his ultimate purposes.

The hem of his royal robes fills the temple. The temple cannot contain his presence. He is with us wherever we may be, wherever we may go. There is nowhere we can go where his presence cannot be found.

He is Holy, Wholly other. This is an expression of his utter moral perfection. It is also an expression of his glory, that he is infinitely beyond anything we could possibly imagine.

5. How does this / would this vision shape not only Isaiah but a nation reeling in the aftermath of Uzziah's death?

I am over all. Yes the King is dead, yes the future is uncertain, yes the danger real and imminent but there is one who holds all things in his hands which undermines their anxiety and uncertainty.

I am with you. There is no promise in light of God's sovereignty that all things will go easy – that we will be free of pain and sorrow – only that the ultimate future of new creation is secure. So whatever may come – God is with us in it. This gives peace in the midst of worry.

I am Holy. The state of Israel was degenerate at the end of Uzziah's reign. God's holiness is calling Israel to repent.

6. What do we learn about the nature of repentance from this encounter?

It is in response to God's holiness.

It is focused on our own personal sin, the impact we have on the brokenness of our world, and the brokenness of our world in general. It is a place of grief and lament.

It is immediately met with God's forgiveness and grace.

7. Why is it that we run from repentance?

We wrongly believe that it is about feeling bad about ourselves.

Once we begin to see our sin we cover it over with other things other than God's forgiveness – be it excuses, justifications, the wrongs of others (I wouldn't have done that if they hadn't have done this), the way we were raised (this is parent's fault).

We often wrongly think of repentance as a movement of remorse and resolution and so never get to repentance.

We do this in relationships all the time – I do this with Laurie - there are times I do things in our relationship borne of deep selfishness – and I feel remorse for that - and I move to apologize so that her forgiveness will rid me of my bad feelings - and then I move to resolution – Laurie - I won't do that again - I promise to do better next time.

And we do that same thing with God – remorse and resolution – and think that what we are doing is repentance – its not -

Because behind that are two grave misconceptions about ourselves – we don't see ourselves honestly enough – we don't give a full accounting - and so we are constantly surprised by how angry – selfish – lustful – hateful we can quickly become – the bottom line is that we don't believe what God says about our true condition.

The other grave misconception is that we think we have the power to change ourselves – so we make resolutions – since we have a light view of sin – we believe we have a minor problem – so it's nothing that a few resolutions can't fix.

Repentance is a true accounting – a complete and utter uncovering – I did do that – I am like that – I can believe I could do that – I have no excuse – I have no covering - Lord forgive me - you are my only hope.

8. The degree of our repentance will be the degree of our cleansing and healing, the more willing we are to name our weakness the more His strength will be operative, the more able we are to admit the sweeter His grace and forgiveness. Discuss.

Simply reflect together on the reality that the primary fruit of repentance is healing, freedom, and joy. This is something not to run from, but toward.

9. The passage ends with Isaiah's calling. How does this passage clarify the heart of the "Covenant of Vocation" series? How does that shape how we are called to live as the people of God?

This passage is the heart of the series in a nutshell.

Humanity created to steward God's good creation by reflecting God's goodness and glory out into the world bringing life.

Grievously humanity has turned to other things, other gods and reflecting such realities out into the world brings not life but death (as Tim reflected on in the current state of Israel at the close of Uzziah's reign)

Turning human hearts toward right relationship with, right orientation toward God for the sake of right reflection is the heart of God's work of salvation.

The encounter ends with Isaiah's call. He will be chosen to invite his people to a similar encounter, that is to behold God's holiness that they might turn away from false gods, turn away from their sin, and by their lives reflect God's goodness and point to a future where God will reign over all bringing flourishing to all.

For your closing prayer perhaps consider the litany of penitence to guide your group's response to the holiness of God.

THE LITANY OF PENITENCE

**Most holy and merciful Father,
we confess to you, to one another,
and to the whole communion of saints
in heaven and on earth,
that we have sinned by our own fault
in thought, word, and deed;
by what we have done,
and by what we have left undone.**

We have not loved you with our whole heart, and mind, and strength.

We have not loved our neighbours as ourselves.

We have not forgiven others, as we have been forgiven.

Have mercy on us, Lord.

We have been deaf to your call to serve as Christ served us.

We have not been true to the mind of Christ.

We have grieved your Holy Spirit.

Have mercy on us, Lord.

We confess to you, Lord, all our past unfaithfulness;

the pride, hypocrisy, and impatience of our lives.

We confess to you, Lord.

Our self-indulgent appetites and ways,
and our exploitation of other people,

We confess to you, Lord.

Our anger at our own frustration,
and our envy of those more fortunate than ourselves.

We confess to you, Lord.

Our intemperate love of worldly goods and comforts,
and our dishonesty in daily life and work,

We confess to you, Lord.

Our negligence in prayer and worship,
and our failure to commend the faith that is in us,

We confess to you, Lord.

Accept our repentance, Lord, for the wrongs we have done:
for our blindness to human need and suffering,
and our indifference to injustice and cruelty.

Accept our repentance, Lord.

For all false judgements,
for uncharitable thoughts toward our neighbours and
for our prejudice and contempt toward those who differ from us,

Accept our repentance, Lord.

For our waste and pollution of your creation,
and our lack of concern for those who come after us,

Accept our repentance, Lord.

Restore us, good Lord, and let your anger depart from us;

Hear us, Lord, for your mercy is great.