

IN NOMINE JESU

YOUR GUILT IS TAKEN AWAY

Hear again the Word of God for the Feast of the Holy Trinity:

And he touched my face, and caused to say, "Behold, this one has touched upon your lips, and your guilt is taken away and your sin (is) atoned for."¹

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ

If you needed to choose one hymn, canticle or song to describe the events included in Isaiah's waking vision, which one would you select?

We have a few in today's Divine Service, as God comes to meet us with His Holiness and removes our guilt and sin from us. While any of them might serve to answer the question, the canticle that covers the text most succinctly and literally is the one we sing after the Lord Jesus Christ comes to us in, with and under the elements of bread and wine. That is the one now named, "Isaiah, Mighty Seer in Days of Old." In it, each High Feast Day here, we recall the living vision and unending service that goes on about the enthroned Lord of All. It is no human whim, or enthusiastic decision that places that vision song in that particular part of the Church's liturgy. It was done long ago to reinforce the reality that the One who is seated in the position of power, might, authority, dominion, honor, glory and holiness is the One whose messengers will soon take from the Altar of God that which will touch often unclean lips with the final Sacrifice for Sin. Dear ones in Christ, you are supposed to behold the Sacrificial Lamb in the purifying, cleansing, and if not properly confessed, consuming holiness of the gifts from the Altar of God. How wonderful that is for we who know our sin, who are

troubled on account of it, and who desire that God would make us right to remain in His Presence forever. Hear again the theme verse for this Feast:

And he touched my face, and caused to say, "Behold, this one has touched upon your lips, and your guilt is taken away and your sin (is) atoned for."²

The theme verse for this Holy Trinity is the last verse of the pericope from the Church's Old Testament vision. It has been so chosen, for it displays to those whose ears are not stopped, and whose hearts are not hardened, the reality of the Holy Trinity's working in God's people. For ease of hearing, the translation just declared has some word order changed from that which is found in the inspired Hebrew. To reinforce what God did for Isaiah, and for all who call out to Him on account of their own sinfulness, hear the burning one's words again:

"Behold, this one has touched upon your lips, and is taken away your guilt and your sin (is) atoned for."³

While that does not ring in our ears as "good English," it does place the emphasis where God has it set. That is, in touching the lips of the man who had just confessed his sinfulness, and his people's sinfulness, the burning coal or stone from the Altar of sacrifice takes away his guilt, and atones for his sin. That is to say, God's emphasis in this text is His cleansing fire of the sacrifice dedicated to Him is that which is taking away and the atoning both guilt and sin. Again, for the regular hearers of the Word of God in this place, it is significant that Isaiah does nothing either to remove his

¹ *Isaiah 6:7.*

² *Isaiah 6:7.*

³ *Isaiah 6:7.*

guilt before the Holy YHWH. Isaiah in this waking vision does not work to pay the price for his sins, nor for the sins of the people among whom he dwells.

What this means is that the Triune God is the One who effects Isaiah's confession – through the witnessing of Holy Things. The Triune God is the One who takes away Isaiah's guilt. The Triune God is the One who atones for Isaiah's sins.

Just so it may be, can be, for you. If you are ever tempted to think that you are called to, or able to, take away your own known and/or felt guilt over any of your sins, remember this day's text. You have been given plenty of helps toward that end. You have the text itself from the Book of Isaiah. You have been taught the hymns and canticles of the Church. You have the entire liturgy to recall that God is the only One who wills to, can, and does, take away your guilt and pay the eternal price that buys you back from the sin's reward – death, the devil and everlasting condemnation.

Today's almost five century old order of service stands as a shining example of just how God wills to take away your sin and present you to Himself as clean, spotless and holy. God's Service this day began with your individual confession. One of its foundational texts is found today in Isaiah's words upon beholding the everlasting reality of God's Service. Overwhelmed with the truth that he was witnessing, knowing the Lord's Word that declares in effect that no human may look upon God and live.

Isaiah says:

"Woe to me! I am lost! For (a) man of unclean lips am I, and in midst of (a) people of unclean lips I dwell. For the King, YHWH Sabaoth my eyes have seen."⁴

⁴ *Isaiah* 6:5-6a.

When you came into this Nave today, when you took your place before the Altar of God, did such awe, wonder, and knowledge of your own unworthiness to behold the mysteries that take place here come into your consciousness? (This is one reason why we ask that visiting, conversation, meeting and greeting before the Divine Service take place outside those doors). Think about the privilege God has granted to you.... He has given you an audience in His Presence. He is unveiling His eternal wonders before your eyes, in your ears, from your mouths, and soon, into your lips!

That is why the Divine Service has traditionally, for almost 2,000 years, begun with God's people confessing their sins. In the centuries before some theologians developed a strong sense of pietism in people, such confession, and the Holy Absolution for which it is done, was performed one-on-one, penitent to confessor. That which has been lost may never be, in our age, fully recovered. For only about 100 years, confession and absolution has taken place before the Divine Service as a corporate rite in our circles, not an individual sacrament, as it was for Isaiah. However, as best as our piety in this fallen age will enable us to stand it, before the Lord's Service begins, we confess our sins, and receive God's forgiveness.

Hear again the order and means that God used to effect Isaiah's absolution, his cleansing and forgiveness:

Then flew one to me from the Seraphim, and in his hand (was a) burning coal in tongs, which he had taken from upon the Altar. And he touched (it) upon my face...⁵

⁵ Isaiah 6:6.

The Seraph, which title or name best translates, “burning one,” is shown to be God’s vehicle and media in which He communicates His divine love – that which cleanses the repentant sinner from his sins. God shows, in the vision of the heavenly things, that He uses His creatures to bring YHWH’s forgiveness to sinners. This He does because His holiness is to sinners - the unholy - a consuming fire. Therefore, God chooses to use means and created vessels to keep His creatures from being burned up in His Real Presence. Yet, even the fiery Seraph cannot touch the things dedicated to God on the Altar of Sacrifice. In taking from the Altar the cleansing fire, with the means provided, God’s messengers bring His holy cleansing fire, and the repentant, believing ones are not consumed by it! That having been declared let us attend to the text again, as we hear Isaiah speak from the beginning again:

In (the) year King Uzziah died, then I saw the Adonai sitting upon (a) throne high and exalted, and His train was filling the Temple.⁶

Of all the Old Testament prophets, Isaiah takes care to note the events of his ministry in terms that allow his hearers to accurately date them. He is the only OT prophet who dates things by using the year in which the Israelite kings died. In the instance for today, perhaps that was because he viewed in the death of King Uzziah, the death of the nation on account of her sins. In any event, we know that this took place mid-eighth century B.C., about 250 years after kings David and Solomon ruled over the united people of God. Uzziah died in the same year that one of the founders of the city of Rome, Romulus, was reportedly born. One empire was collapsing while another was

being born. Both once held the earthly keys to rule over God's people. Both empires died in time, due to their own sinfulness and internal corruption, and unwillingness to return daily to God for confession and forgiveness. Such is the way kingdoms go in this fallen world. Just so, such is happening with increasing intensity to our empire.

But, such things can never happen to the true Empire of God, that which He has willed to rule through His Word. His Kingdom, rule and dominion will last forever. The keys that open the Kingdom of Heaven to repentant sinners, and that lock the gates of Heaven to those who remain unrepentant, will never cease to work in this creation.

That is indicated in the description of God which Isaiah sees. He proclaims:

I saw the Adonai sitting upon (a) throne high and exalted, and His train was filling the Temple.⁷

Isaiah does not describe God. He describes what he sees about God. He declares that YHWH is seated upon a throne. This indicates His rule and judgment, power and majesty. Adonai is both high and exalted. That means that He is to be understood to be over all things of creation. All heaven, earth, and the things under the earth are subject to Him. In addition, the prophet declares that the train of His robe fills the Temple. This is to indicate that His rule in heaven extends to earth and fills it.

(Those words were left out of some translations of the Hebrew, for the ancients believed and felt that they showed God in too human a form. Little did they know that He would take on our form, without sin, and carry it into the grave and from there to life, and from

⁶ *Isaiah 6:1.*

⁷ *Isaiah 6:1.*

there to the throne in heaven as seen by Isaiah)! To make this point clear: Isaiah is seeing Christ in human form enthroned and ruling seven and one half centuries before Christ was born in our flesh.⁸

What has all that to do with the Trinity?

Everything. The Son is witnessed to as One with the Father by the Spirit. The unseen God, the Father, is seen in His Son. And the Spirit testifies to that truth.

We are to know that in the heavenly Temple, an antitype of the earthly Temple, Adonai Sabaoth meets with His people. He does so on the basis of the Sacrifice, that which atones for sin and takes away guilt. In this vision, Heaven touches earth, and sinners are forgiven. Again we have a tie to the Lord's Service today. Having had our sins forgiven, we joined our voices several times with the angelic choirs. Heaven meets earth here, for where God is, specifically where Christ is, heaven is. This is declared in our hearts when we grasp the reality that God in this vision is depicted in human terms, sitting, wearing a robe and train.

The burning ones, who only appear in this Book, fly above and about the enthroned One, and continue to sing words we know so well. That is because they echo out of our Gloria hymns and canticles, out of the trishagions (three holies) of the Sanctus of the Divine Liturgy, and the hymns of this day. Antiphonally that song resounds throughout the creation: "Holy, Holy, Holy YHWH Sabaoth," and "all the earth is full of His glory!" What a privilege we have that we may join our voices to that unending

⁸ cf. *John* 12:41.

hymn! What a result they bring in the Presence of the Almighty God: for it is in the singing of that eternal praise that

*shook the foundations of the thresholds from the call of the calling one, and the house was filled with smoke.*⁹

If you haven't thought of that revelation when you have sung "Isaiah, Mighty Seer..." in the past, I pray you do so today. For it is the call of the calling one, the one echoing the thrice Holy and its response that shakes to the core the creation. And, it is the song of the holy creation, that which has been redeemed by the Sacrifice of the Altar which is ever before God, that brings forth the smoke of the whole burnt offering for sin, a sweet-smelling aroma to God, which permeates the totality of the places where heaven meets earth. In God's all-seeing vision, it is here today.

In your senses it will be here soon. For there, on the Altar of God in this place, the Sin Offering once slain, and now living, is given forth by God, through the vehicles He has chosen, to touch the lips of those who are of unclean lips. Thus, the purifying of Isaiah has become a type of your purifying. His lips, touched and cleansed by the fire from the Altar of Sacrifice, typify your lips, touched and cleansed by the fire from the Altar of Final Sacrifice. Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

The peace which passes all understanding guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus

Feast of the Holy Trinity (LSB One-year series)
Isaiah 6:1-7; Romans 11:33-36; John 3:1-17

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Pastor Michael A. Morehouse

SOLI DEO GLORIA

⁹ *Isaiah 6:4.*

TRANSLATION, 2ND DRAFT

In (the) year King Uzziah died, then I saw the Adonai sitting upon (a) throne high and exalted, and His train was filling the Temple.¹⁰

Seraphim were standing from above Him: six wings, six wings for each one, with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew.¹¹

And one continued to call to one and said, "Holy, Holy, Holy, YHWH Sabaoth; all the earth (is) full of His glory."¹²

And shook the foundations the thresholds from the call of the calling one, and the house was filled with smoke.¹³

And I said, "Woe to me! I am lost! For (a) man of unclean lips am I, and in midst of (a) people of unclean lips I dwell. For the King, YHWH Sabaoth my eyes have seen."¹⁴

Then flew one to me from the Seraphim, and in his hand (was a) burning coal in tongs, which he had taken from upon the Altar.¹⁵

And he touched upon my face, and caused to say, "Behold, this one has touched upon your lips, and is taken away your guilt and your sin (is) atoned for."¹⁶

¹⁰ Isaiah 6:1.

¹¹ Isaiah 6:2.

¹² Isaiah 6:3.

¹³ Isaiah 6:4.

¹⁴ Isaiah 6:5.

¹⁵ Isaiah 6:6.

¹⁶ Isaiah 6:7.