

**+ Isaiah 6:1-8 + Listen to the Voice of Our Triune God!<sup>1</sup> +  
+ 1st Sunday after Pentecost: Holy Trinity + 22 May 2016 +**

You can't help, but hear them. They're everywhere. Turn on your TV. They're yelling over each other. Go online. They're blasting at you through provocative written text, over-emotional arguments, or viral videos. Go to school. Go to work. Go out into the community. Go home, where even in that so-called sanctuary, they clamor for your attention. Your phone rings. Your text or message notification dings. More talking heads open their mouths or a billboard shouts, and they have your attention again—or so they're trying. So many voices out there clamoring for your attention.

Have you ever considered how many voices call for your attention every day? There are so many voices calling and yelling and screaming and even whispering for your attention—and it's all so noisy. We live in a noisy world, where quiet and silence are rare and brief. You have to admit that God's gift of communication is something marvelous, but like all good gifts that our God has created for us, Satan does his best to ruin that gift too. He puts his masked voice into the noisy throat of others.

Sometimes it's the voice of a show or a movie or a blog. Sometimes it's the voice of a relative or a friend or a co-worker. Sometimes Satan speaks through an academic expert or a politician or a talking head or a celebrity. Sometimes he speaks through a best-selling book or a Facebook page or Twitter feed with thousands of followers or a screaming headline on a news site. With all the voices in this world crying out for your attention, it's hard to siphon out what is false, what is half-true, and what actually is true.

That's what's amazing about the portion of God's Word before us. It's a very noisy scene that the prophet Isaiah describes. There are voices worth our attention, but through all that noise—and through all the needless noise of this world—cuts the voice of our triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, three persons, yet one God.

So on this Trinity Sunday step into the throne room of our God and listen. For a few minutes, block out all those other voices demanding your attention and listen to the voices in that throne room—the sweet voices of the angels and the fearful voice of the prophet. Yet above all, **LISTEN TO THE VOICE OF OUR TRIUNE GOD** as he speaks to you and me.

As you walk into the Lord's throne room, you can't help, but hear the sweetest, most moving, most powerful song you've ever heard. It's coming from above you, so you look up and what do you see? You see the seraphim, angels shining with holy glory with two wings covering their faces and two wings covering their feet and two wings causing them to fly, but they're not just flying in place. No, they fly back and forth across the room over the throne of God, while they sing back and forth to each other that glorious song. ***"Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory."*** It's the sweet song of true praise and worship.

Now why would we call that "true praise"? A fellow pastor once described it this way, ***"True worship in its essence rejoices in God for being God. It praises God for who he is—a Trinity—eternal and incomprehensible in glory and majesty." "God...being God."*** You and I don't normally think of it that way, but the truth is, God loves being God! God loves being God so much that you will never, ever find God wishing he wasn't God. He doesn't get tired of it. He never gets bored with it or wonders if he could do something else. Being God is the absolute pinnacle of all things—and therefore he deserves and receives all glory and power and majesty and praise. So the angels fly back and forth praising him, but they don't ever want to trade places with us. Why? They get to see God's glory in heaven.

Centuries ago there was a pastor in North Africa whose name was Augustine. He was an eloquent defender of the Christian faith, who once said that Christians in various times of their lives are on one of three levels. The most immature level of our understanding of eternal things is that we want to go to heaven simply so we don't go to hell. A step up from that, but no less self-centered, is that we want to go to heaven because there are so many great blessings for us to enjoy. Yet we actually reach true maturity in our faith when we want to go to heaven for no other reason than to be with God, to see him in his glory, and praise him.

Makes you think, doesn't it? Why do you come to worship? Is there a voice in your head saying, "I go to church because it meets *my* needs" or "*I* want a church that helps *me* grow"? Do you ever go home thinking, "*I* didn't get much out of that service"? Now it's important to be concerned about your personal faith, but are you always

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<sup>1</sup> The original concept and some of the language for this sermon were received with thanks from a Trinity Sunday sermon by Prof. Keith Wessel delivered at the 2005 WELS National Conference on Worship, Music, and the Arts.

sure that that is the voice of true praise and not self-centered immaturity? That's why we need to listen to the sweet voices of the angels praising God for being our God.

Yet the next voice you hear isn't so sweet. As you stand there in the throne room of God with the seraphim flying over your head, you see the doorposts and thresholds shake and the room fill with smoke—and you see a fearful figure cowering before God. You hear the prophet cry out. ***“Woe to me...I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.”***

Why is Isaiah so fearful? Why is he so terrified before God? Perhaps we fail to understand his reaction because we've lost any sense of the sacred in this age. Yet when you read God's Word, how do sinful mortals typically respond when they find themselves in the presence of the holy God? They cower. They cover their eyes. They fall prostrate on the ground or at least to their knees. They fully expect to be immediately wiped off the face of the earth. With fear-filled awe, they realize that they shouldn't be there because they are sinners before the holy God.

That's why you see Isaiah react as he does. He is being confronted with the reality of his sinfulness. David buried his face in his hands when the prophet Nathan confronted him with his sins of adultery and murder. Peter fell to his knees and begged Jesus to leave him when Jesus caused him and his friends to catch actual boatloads of fish. Paul looked at his life and concluded that he was the chief of sinners. Isaiah fully realized that he deserved deadly judgment because he was ***“a man of unclean lips”*** who lived ***“among a people of unclean lips”*** and he had seen the holy King.

On a Sunday like today where we focus on who our God is—the Holy Trinity, we're forced to recognize who we really are. If you don't rightly recognize who you are, then you will come to the false conclusion that standing before God isn't that big of a deal, because even though you might have some problems, you're working on them and making progress! But that's a false voice, isn't it?

I realize how painful it is to listen to Isaiah and stare with him into the mirror of God's holiness. I see the face of a damned sinner staring back at me too. Yes, a sinner who has proudly violated God's holiness. A sinner who sees God's sheer holiness and realizes that I am so unlike him. A sinner with unclean lips created to utter words of praise and thanks and love, but used to utter self-righteous, hurtful, proud, angry, filthy, and godless words. A sinner who deserves to be shut out from the presence of the holy God forever left to watch from a horrible distance away. With Isaiah, I too cry out, ***“Woe to me!”***

Yet look and see an altar in the middle of God's throne room. King David once sang, ***“The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit. A broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.”*** (Psalm 51:17) There on that altar Isaiah pours out his broken spirit in repentance. There before the holy God you admit your guilt and trust in his mercy—and that's when you hear it. You hear the voice that drowns out all others, even the songs of praise and the cries of repentance. You hear the voice of the triune God—the voice of grace.

What makes celebrating Trinity Sunday so important? Most people could care less about the Scriptural teaching of the Trinity, not seeing how it applies to their lives now. Or you might think that the Trinity is important if you have a conversation with a Muslim or if a Mormon or Jehovah's Witness knocks on your door. Yet the Trinity is most important because that teaching focuses our eyes and ears on Jesus.

On the pages of Scripture, God the Father does many things, but above all, he reveals that he is the One who gave his one and only Son for you. On the pages of Scripture, God the Holy Spirit does many things, but above all, he reveals that he is the One who testifies about Jesus. On the pages of Scripture, God the Son does many things, but above all, he is the Savior of all people. The Scriptural teaching of the Trinity focuses our attention on what is eternally important—God's unconditional love for us in Christ.

As you stand in the throne room of the triune God, listen to his voice of grace! An angel takes a live coal from the altar of sacrifice and touches Isaiah's lips. Listen to the sweet voice of Christ's righteousness. ***“See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for.”*** God forgives your sin in only one way. He only forgives through his Son, whom he sent into the world to suffer for you and to abandon the tomb on Easter morning so you could hear these words, “Rejoice! Your sins are forgiven. You will not perish. You have eternal life in me!” It is that voice of grace that you hear when God's representative stands before you and declares, “Your sins are forgiven” or when he gives you Christ's body and blood ***“given and shed for you”*** in the Holy Supper.

Then you hear the voice of our gracious, triune God once more. ***“Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?”*** How amazing! Not only does your triune God speak to you through Jesus, but he also speaks to our world through you! He doesn't force you to go out by guilt or fear or out of duty or obligation, but he sends you out because you have listened to his voice. You have seen the glory of the triune God. You have been made holy by the blood of Christ. He spoke to you first with the voice of his forgiveness, and you have heard things the world needs to hear. So you go as people who know that soon you will rise above all the noise of this world and soar to the heights of heaven. You will join your voices with those of the angels around the throne of God in one unending song of praise. Until then, keep listening and go! Amen.