

You'd like to win the lottery. You'd love it if the winnings were tripled. You'd like time off for vacation. You'd love it if the boss told you to take triple time for vacation. You like your grandma's fresh baked cookies. You love it when she makes a triple batch so there are just more of them. It makes sense that if you like one of something you'll love triple the amount of it.

God is something we like. In fact we've come to know him as someone who loves us and we love him. So using our logic of liking and loving, if God were tripled we would love that even more. Imagine triple the amount of prayers he could answer. Triple the love he could show us. Triple the good things he could give to us. At times reading the Bible it seems like God is tripled. But for those who have never read the Bible or aren't as familiar with it they might have no idea about God at all, three or one or anything. These are people that don't like him, love him. They're not afraid of him, don't respect him, and don't recognize him as God. They certainly don't care about what he says or does.

Let's be clear, God is not a tripled god. There aren't three gods. We're going to confess what we know about God in a couple of minutes in the Athanasian Creed. It clarifies as much as we can about God, three in one, the holy Trinity. Already it starts to jumble in our minds. There's plenty about God we need to know and plenty that could still frighten us if not properly understood. That's where Isaiah's prophecy comes in from the first lesson. In it Isaiah is called to be a prophet and in the process we learn about the Holy Trinity and what he does to save us. We hear the seraphim calling...

**Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord
Our sins have us trembling
His grace has us ready to serve**

If I asked you to picture God what comes to mind? Is it a grandfatherly figure with a long flowing beard and silver hair? Is it a muscular man sitting on a throne? Probably none of you pictured God as something you'd be afraid of. How many of you had smoke, shaking doorposts, and a robe that fills an entire temple?

Isaiah had a vision showing God is not like human beings. King Uzziah, a great king of his day, extended the boundaries of Israel back to their furthest points. He brought peace and made prosperity for the nation. But while he died, God still rules. **"In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple."** There is never a time when God is not ruling. And he's got subjects, heavenly beings called seraphs, different from angels. Seraphs have six wings and four of them they use for covering face and feet. Not even the heavenly beings can look at the almighty God. The doorposts shake and smoke fills the temple as the seraphs call out their song.

This was not a friend Isaiah was standing before. This was the holy God. **"Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory."** He is three times holy. Not only perfect but he is also completely separate from human beings. He should strike fear into the heart of every human because of one thing in us, sin. God hates sin and he hates the sinner. Yes, God hates the sinner too. Isaiah knew it. He was unclean, sinful. He was unfit to stand in God's presence and deserved swift punishment.

In general the world is ignorant of the true God. Especially they're ignorant or try to remain ignorant about their own sinful condition. They ridicule God rather than come to grips with his holiness, perfection, and hatred for sin and sinners. It's easier to live in denial than to stand afraid like Isaiah. We might show ignorance at times like the rest, but for the most part that's not our problem. In general no one here doubts their sinful condition. We identify ourselves with Isaiah fairly easily. **"Woe to me! I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips."** Yup, that's us. We feel it clearly, like Isaiah we deserve destruction.

We need no more convincing, but God drives the point home for everyone. Did you ever stop and think while an extremely bad storm was going on that God is the one that gives the world rain? Or when a hurricane is lining up in the Atlantic Ocean did you ever think that God is the one that directs each cloud where he wants it to go? Or while you're waiting to see the doctor in the ER did you ever stop and think that God is the one who designed your body and so he knows its intricacies better than any doctor ever will? These no person can deny. Not believers, not unbelievers. No one can look at the world around and conclude God doesn't exist. We're without excuse. As powerful and perfect as he shows himself our sins have us trembling.

Holy, holy, holy is the Lord. So what would he want with a bunch of sinners like us? The one perfect in justice, perfect in holiness, and perfect in power needs nothing from us. He exists completely independent of all human beings. Yet he reveals himself to us. He had the Bible recorded for a reason. Jesus explained why in response to Nicodemus. **"I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again."** You need to be born again. You need what only God can give to you. And you need it if you're going to be saved from hell. Isaiah needed it and so does every human being. Our sins make us tremble but God's grace has us ready to serve.

At first it seems like everything in the vision Isaiah had was there to make him afraid. But there were things in the vision God used to show Isaiah that he had done something special for him. For one, Isaiah didn't immediately die. As an unholy person standing before the holy God he should have died immediately. But God spared him because of something he would do. God sends one of his serving seraphs to Isaiah. **"Then one of the seraphs flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. With it he touched my mouth and said, 'See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for.'"** A coal from the altar touched unclean lips and made them pure. It wasn't the coal but what it represented. It came from the altar on which sacrifices were made. Only one sacrifice has the ability to purify that which is sinful.

Purified of all his sins the once fearful Isaiah was filled with courage and eagerness. His shortcomings bothered him no more because God's grace filled his heart. His sins were forgiven. His guilt was taken away. God's grace worked on his heart and made it ready to serve. **"Here am I. Send me!"**

We stand before God with unclean lips and unclean hearts. We have nothing to offer, nothing we could even hope to give to God to make up for our sins. We're all too aware that God's not a friend to us in our sins. But the holy, holy, holy Lord has changed the situation. Christ is the difference maker. Christ was sacrificed on the altar of the cross. It was his bloodshed that was needed for sins. It is in the face of Christ Jesus we see the highest glory of God. Christ Jesus is God's only answer to sin, rebellion, and perversion. All sin is purged in Jesus. He's the new life for sinners, the salvation of the world. He's the new life and the only way to heaven. Jesus is the Savior.

God himself reached across the expanse that separated sinners from his holiness. He changed our status by an act of grace carried out by his Son Jesus. It's through the Bible and the work of the Holy Spirit that we come to know and believe. And there you have each of the three persons of the Trinity active in your salvation. Three persons, still only one God, and one grace by which he saves you and me. Our greatest service is to sing the praises of his name. It's more than just repetition of the Holy, Holy, Holy. It's deep meditation on his attributes and on his Word. It's living a life of humility. It's being willing to stand and say, **"Here am I. Send me!"** In other words it's living a life of faith in Christ and living for God's glory.