
Gospel Speaking Ministry

Isaiah 6:1-13

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Introduction When I started public speaking the year was 1975. I was in eighth grade. My assignment was a descriptive speech over how to shoot a basketball. Though I knew the topic fairly well, I shook and stammered as one tasered by a cop. I vowed to stay with basketball and stay away from public speaking.

My next encounter as I recall with public speaking was at a Junior College. I cannot remember my assignment. I only recall my technique. I was terrified. The professor helped me by utilizing a simple method. When I got up to speak, I was to stare at the back of the room. This approach took the edge off of the terror but left me looking stupid nonetheless. I vowed once again to never go through such pain as public speaking.

Have you had moments like me when speaking publicly was as attractive as chewing glass? Does it bother any of you that we as God's people are to speak God's word even when it's unpopular? Do you find yourself needing help and hope to carry out the assignment of speaking the gospel to people? <a brief recap of the series segueing into today's topic>

We all are called to minister in the church by loving the Lord fully and loving each other faithfully. One of the ways we are to love each other and the world around us is to speak the truth in love. Today we want to explore how the gospel will fit us and fuel us for a speaking ministry. We will find help as we turn to Isaiah 6.

Background information

Verse one tells us of the historical setting. King Uzziah died (according to my sources he died around 740bc. Fourteen years or so prior to the Assyrian captivity (722bc).

Uzziah was a good king bringing much prosperity and peace to the nation. He started out good trusting and treasuring the LORD. The LORD was with him expanding his reign far and wide. But when he was at the top of his game, he became proud. He wanted what only priests were allowed to do. He went into the Temple to make an incense offering unto the LORD. The priests stopped him. As a result, he became angry. God addressed his pride by plaguing Uzziah with Leprosy. Uzziah was banned from the house of the Lord. He lived the rest of his life in another house separated from the Temple. The land was at peace when Uzziah died.

However, now Judah is without the King. The results of being without the king are horrible! Like it was in the aftermath of Solomon's reign, Uzziah's death brought about a season of anarchy. Judah's kings now were decreasing in righteousness. Assyria became stronger and stronger. Judah became weaker and weaker. It was into this decay and decline that Isaiah speaks. The way the LORD prepared him for his speaking ministry can greatly assist us in our speaking the gospel ministry. And so, how did the Lord prepare Isaiah?

We can notice how the Lord prepared Isaiah for his speaking ministry by learning an easy to remember overview to assist us in thinking through chapter 6.

The four words I want us to remember will represent the four points outlined in the text. These words are 1) Majesty 2) Misery 3) Mercy 4) Ministry.

We will expound the text with an eye toward a *Gospel Speaking Ministry* for each of us.

Majesty

v.1-4

In v.1-4 we come to the start of the passage. We notice the revelation of the glory of majesty the Lord. We can notice that Gospel speaking ministry starts with a view of His majesty. This majesty is put forward first

As a vision

The first part of v.1 tells us that Isaiah saw. This seeing is not due to a natural capacity. This view was not created from Isaiah. No. This was a vision of God from God. This is direct revelation that is rare in the Bible. It was objective, outside Isaiah's doing and yet could only be seen by the one God chose to see it.

As the Lord sitting upon a throne

This vision starts by describing what Isaiah saw. He saw the Lord sitting upon a throne. This description communicates total sovereignty as both a judge and a king. He sees the sovereign Lord prepared to pronounce his kingly judgment upon all rebellion.

As the hem of his robe filling the Temple

This king has no rivals as noticed in the description of his robe. This king's hem of his robe filled the Temple. This is a most remarkable picture. It communicates just how much room the Lord gives to those who would like to rule with him. The Temple is filled with his kingly royalty. Nobody else has any room in this room to reign. This room is called the Temple. And the furniture we see is a throne.

As surrounded by seraphim

And notice, too, who is around the Lord. These are seraphim. Not to be confused with cherubim or angels, these are spiritual creatures who have faces, wings, hands, arms moral capacity, prominence, and so forth. Notice two things related to the seraphim.

1. Six wings. They have six wings. They use them in specific ways. The text says that each of them took two wings to cover their faces. This communicates the need for protection. They cannot bear to stare and the splendor. As we could not bear to stare at the sun in its fullness, so also the Seraphim have no capacity to look at the glory of God without their retinas melting. Next, they take two wings and cover their feet. This communicates humility. They have no foot to stand on in the presence of the King. And finally we notice that the other pair of wings was used for flying. This tells the reader that they were poised to obey the King gladly and speedily.
2. Powerful message. Notice finally what the Seraphim said. They called out to another "Holy, Holy, Holy is the LORD of host". Here we come to the heart of the heart of the revelation. We come to an attribute of God that is described in three ways – holy, holy and holy. This way of communicating was a Jewish form of emphasizing.

They mentioned holy three times in order for the listeners to sense the out of this world status of the Lord. Holy tells us that the Lord is without sin. But it says much more than just that. It highlights the “otherliness” of God. He is unlike anyone you know. He is matchless, peerless; in a class all by his own. He has no rivals as he is the LORD of hosts or armies (both earthly and heavenly). The revelation of v.1-4 reveals the Sovereign God whose glory fills the earth. His reign, in other words, is not restricted. He rules over everything. And He rules in love – holy love. He rules over everything in justice – holy justice. Here are windows to the Temple. Here is revelation of the majesty of the Lord.

As the foundations shook and the house filled with smoke

To communicate the contours of the majesty of God we come to the last phrase in v.4 “As the foundations shook and the house filled with smoke” describes the effects of the presence of the majesty of the Lord. This imagery is drawn from Mount Sinai and the Sanctuary.

What response could we expect from one who sees such a sight? How does v.1-4 connect to v.5 and help us to understand Gospel speaking ministry?

Misery

v.5

v. 5 shows us how Gospel Speaking Ministry continues. It moves forward by falling down.

After Isaiah was shown a vision of the majesty of the Lord, he spoke. Notice the first words that came from his mouth. “Woe is me”. Bursting out from his heart came an agonizing cry. The word “woe” communicates a sense of expectation of Isaiah. He believes that calamity is about to fall. And calamity on his head was his dread. Why does he say this and say it with such emotion?

After this initial cry, he gives the reader three reasons for his misery. You will see this in your Bible by noticing the word “for” in v.5. Three times he uses it to introduce the reasons for the agonizing cry.

1. The first reason is found in the phrase “for I am lost”. Perhaps a better way to translate this Hebrew phrase would be “for I am undone, ruined, I have been made to cease, I am cut off, I am doomed to die”! Isaiah’s vision clutched his soul to the point that he sensed his destruction.
2. The second reason Isaiah gives for his heart-stopping anxiety is found in the phrase “for I am a man of unclean lips and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips”. He recognizes utterly his vulnerability in the presence of holiness. He is made conscious of personal sinfulness. Seized by the sight of God’s supremacy, Isaiah understands that praise is a privilege not granted to all. Only for those who recognize and relate to verse seven can stand in the presence of holiness of God.
3. The third and final reason Isaiah gives for his initial terrified scream can be noticed in the phrase “for I’ve seen the King”! According to the Bible nobody can see God and live. As you trace these types of encounters throughout the Bible, you will notice the effects it has on people. They are said to fall as dead men.

How does this understanding of his sinfulness assist him in the going forth in speaking ministry? What can we glean from this misery that will help us in *Gospel Speaking Ministry*?

Mercy

v.6-7

Gospel Speaking Ministry cannot stall in misery. If he only sensed personal unworthiness Isaiah would live out the rest of his life in despair. There will be no forward movement in Gospel Ministry through a life of hopelessness. But thanks be to God, the chapter does not stop there.

As we read on we see in v.6-7 we see the next stage in *Gospel Speaking Ministry*. What is it that we all need due to the fact that we all are in the “Isaiah Predicament”? Under the weight of the glory of God our defenseless life is driven into the dust. What Isaiah needed we all in this room need. In v.6-7 we come across mercy.

The stunning vision of the majesty of God convicts God’s servant of sin (as seen in v.5). This conviction gives way to confession of sin and was heard in the throne room of God. Notice what happens.

One Seraph broke ranks and flew to Isaiah. Now ask yourself the question “why did he do this”? Why would a Seraph leave the choir encircling the Lord of glory and come to Isaiah? What prompted this Seraph to do what he did? As noted in v.2, Seraphim are posed to obey the One on the throne. We can almost see the LORD nodding gladly to the Seraph to bring to Isaiah what is needed to carry out gospel ministry.

The acknowledgement of his sin brings Isaiah mercy. This mercy is depicted in symbolism. The burning coal from the altar and pressing it upon the sinful lips of Isaiah pictures something life-giving. As v.7 demonstrates, symbolism needs interpretation. The last part of v.7 says, “your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for”.

Off from the altar comes the remedy for sin. The point here is clear. Isaiah has been fully forgiven of his guilt and sin. He no longer is under the penalty of sin. He is forgiven. Though he did not know what we know about the final sacrifice for sin; Jesus Christ’s crucifixion, his confidence was in God who said, “your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for. Isaiah put his trust in the promise of God.

In this phase of *Gospel Speaking Ministry* we come to what enables obedience to the Lord’s commission. We find the primary point to our June series over the Gospel in v.6-7. For our lives at the Chapel to bloom full and live well for His glory boldness is in order. For us to take the Word of God to people who need the Word of God we must enjoy the mercy of God. We must sense the weight of guilt due our sin and then sense the wealth of mercy due His grace. To speak the gospel clearly and carefully and compassionately and courageously we must be gripped by His majesty, convicted of our misery and then overjoyed by His mercy. These phases will lead to what we see in v.9-13. These verses map out *Gospel Speaking Ministry*.

Ministry

v.8-13

Gospel Speaking Ministry has some basic characteristics as seen in these verses.

A readiness

v.8

First, a readiness as seen in v.8. This verse records for us the commission of the prophet for his prophetic ministry. The Lord says, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” When Isaiah heard these words, his heart thrilled at the chance of ministry. We see a readiness in Isaiah. “Here am I! Send me” comes bellowing from the freshly clean lips of the prophet.

An obedience

v.9-13

In response to this God-given readiness, in v.9 we hear the Lord say to Isaiah, “Go and say to this people”. His ministry has two parts. He is to 1) go and he is to 2) speak. What follows depicts an obedience; an obedience to God’s Word inspired by forgiveness from God’s grace.

By way of words

v.9

This obedience comes first by way of words as seen in v.9. He was to go and SAY. The message is outlined for us in the latter part of v.9. “Keep on hearing but do not understand; keep on seeing, but do not perceive”.

We are first to understand that Isaiah’s ministry had words to deliver. He was not to be silent. He was not merely to do good. He was to speak.

Similarly for us, Gospel ministry is not exclusively good deeds. Oh, we are to help others tangibly and compassionately. But we are always to be clear over what is clear. The gospel is good NEWS. There are words attached to our ways. These words are life to those who are dead. We must as 1Peter3 tells us “be ready to make a defense for the hope that is in you”. The hope is Christ and his perfect life for us and his sin-carrying death for us and his bodily resurrection for us. The ministry we are talking about this morning is seen in an obedience enabled by gospel forgiveness that will speak gospel truth to others.

Into difficulty

v.10

But if v.9 was Isaiah’s message, v.10-13 describe his mission. This mission is pointed toward difficulty. Notice the target of his audience. V.10 calls them “this people”. Generally one expects in the O.T. to have Judah described as “my people”. “This people” indicates a group of people operating in unbelief who no longer care for God (as described earlier in the book; cf. 1:3). Furthermore, he was to command them to hear and see. Yet the effects of his preaching are noticed in the words “make the heart of this people dull”. The word “dull” literally means “fat”. Make their hearts so fat that they cannot sense their danger. They will not be moved by warnings. They are fat hearted growing ever fatter readied for the slaughter of the fierce judgment of God as they listen to Isaiah’s words.

In all this activity, there is an end to achieve. The gavel drops. Judgment is here. The nation under God must come to an end.

And if this be so, it must be demonstrated that it is a nation that has no concern for God. It must be shown that it is actually no longer a nation under God. Consequently, it is true and just that “this people” be banished from the land – Be sent deep into exile!

Isaiah’s obedience to the call moves him into difficulty.

With affection

v.11a

But I love how Isaiah responded. In v.11 he has a question for God.

“How long O Lord?” was his question. Now I originally took this question to reflect some sort of impatience in Isaiah. You know, “how long O Lord must I participate in a ministry that will yield no fruit and will put me in danger”. But the more I got acquainted with this man in this book, I realized I was wrong. Impatience is not what this question is reflecting.

Out of love for people not impatience over a difficult task Isaiah moves out in *Gospel Speaking Ministry*. With affection for the hardened people around him he longs for the Word to do what it did in his life. He yearns for the majesty of God to be revealed to the hearts of “this people”. If God reveals His majesty people will sense their misery and cry out their confessions of sin. As this happens the mercy of God will meet their misery and transform them into people on mission as it did Isaiah.

By endurance

v.11b-13b

In v.11b-13a we come to the Lord’s answer to Isaiah’s question. Isaiah was to preach judgment until all the cities laid waste. Until the full effect of the Babylonian captivity occurred, Isaiah was to preach. The characteristic of his obedience to the commission in these verses can be seen as endurance. He has much work to do. The word will be difficult. But the preaching is a preaching for repentance. Coupled with 1:18 we can hear him saying “Come now, let us reason together says the LORD: though your sins are like scarlet they shall be as white as snow...”. He like Jonah knew that the Lord was compassionate and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in loving kindness (cf. Jon.4:2). But unlike Jonah, Isaiah had a heart for his people. He was to endure through this difficult speaking ministry with an eye toward hope. And hope we see as the chapter concludes.

In hope

v.13c

The end of v.13 refers to “the holy seed is its stump”. The term seed or offspring hints at a small group whose hearts will be changed like Isaiah’s heart was changed. The Bible uses a word picture frequently of judgment. It is one of a strong tree that is chopped down. Here we see the same picture. But notice that the tree felled (representing the Babylonian captivity) leaves a stump. This tells us that there is a believing community; a covenant community who is brought to life and kept alive. This hope is further developed by Isaiah in 11:1. In this text we notice that there is a shoot that comes from the stump. This branch shall bear fruit. David’s dynasty is not completely destroyed. Though the kings of Isaiah’s day were drifting toward evil, there will be another King whose realm and reign will produce much life. He was known as Immanuel, the Messiah to come for his remnant.

And this remnant under the preaching of Majesty, Misery, Mercy and Ministry will be changed like Isaiah. They will have ears to hear, eyes to see, hearts that understand and whose lives will turn and be healed.

Isaiah's speaking ministry, therefore, was characterized in hope.

Conclusion To conclude, we have seen a man whose name was Isaiah who was called of God to a speaking ministry that was not popular. We noticed that the pattern of seeing majesty that leads to sensing misery that moves to confessing sin that yields forgiveness of sins that gives rise to obedient ministry; this chain reaction applies not only to Isaiah.

Concluding Perspective

We come away from Isaiah 6 with a perspective. We see that *the revelation of God's majesty transforms God's people and inspires them for **Gospel Speaking Ministry** (even when it is unpopular).*

Concluding Points

The take away from this may be as follows.

- MAJESTY
 - “seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ” – 2Cor.4:4
- MISERY
 - “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive and cleanse” – 1Jn.1:9
- MERCY
 - “Because of the Lord's steadfast love we are not cut off, his mercies are new every morning” – Lam.3:22,23
- MINISTRY
 - “speaking the truth in love” – Eph 4:15



Title

Text

Speaker

The Chapel Pulpit • <date> Sunday Morning

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Introduction

Heading

➤ **Heading**

Heading

Conclusion