

# Have You Seen God? (All Age Service)

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[ 0 : 00 ] Okay, today's reading is Isaiah chapter 6, verses 1 to 4, and it's found on page 691 of your pew Bibles.

Okay, Isaiah's commission. In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord, high and exalted, seated on a throne.

And the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him were seraphim, each with six wings. With two wings they covered their faces, and with two they covered their feet.

And with two they were flying. And they were calling to one another, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty.

The whole earth is full of his glory. At the sound of their voices, the doorposts and thresholds shook, and the temple was filled with smoke.

[ 1 : 09 ] Thanks be to God. So if you're a child and you want to be nearer on hearing the talk, do you want to come forward now? Maybe you bring a grown-up with you and come to the front.

If you'd rather just stay in your seat where mum and dad are, that's fine. But if some children want to head to the front to get a better view, that's fine. And we're going to think together about the first part of our reading today from Isaiah 6.

And then shortly we'll bring Stephen back and we'll hear the next bit of what happened. Okay, so you want to grab a seat? Brilliant. If you just sit back, is that alright?

Just sit back there. Great, okay. Brilliant. Wow. So let's just think about some of the different things that Isaiah saw that day. Because they show us what God is like.

So first of all, Isaiah told us who he saw. He said that he saw the Lord high and exalted. And he saw him seated on a throne. So already that tells us something about God.

[ 2 : 07 ] Who sits on a throne? A king. A king. Brilliant. Thanks, Jay. So the Lord is king. He says, my eyes have seen the king.

But he couldn't really look at God because God is spirit. He's so incredible we can't see him. But he gives us pictures to help us understand incredible things about God.

So the first thing is that it was probably like looking at blinding light. One second, Isaiah is thinking about the roast chicken in the oven at home.

And he's thinking about how long he's got left on his parking. And then suddenly there's this blinding light. Now we've put this on full. It's quite bright. So just be careful if it comes near you. I don't want to, you know, you might need to just close your eyes.

It's a bit like looking at the sun. You don't look directly at the sun. But that's what it would have been like for Isaiah. Suddenly he's in the temple. And it's blindingly bright for him. Because of the holiness of God.

[ 3 : 06 ] Blinding light. We're going to come down here. People are being responsibly sheltered by responsible adults. And left to their own devices by other adults.

Amazing. Okay. Would have been astonishing. Astonishingly bright. High and exalted. That's what God's like. Wow. He's amazing. What happens next? It says the train of his robe filled the temple.

At the royal wedding, there was a train on the robe. When Prince William got married to Kate, there was this incredible dress. A lot of people were talking about the dress. And the train of her dress was huge.

Look, that's her sister as bridesmaid carrying the train of her robe. And look at them in the church in the abbey. It's amazing, isn't it, how big that is? But the thing is, it didn't fill the church, did it?

It's not that big. But when Isaiah sees God on his throne, the robe coming down from heaven, the train of the robe fills the entire temple. Now, the temple was 60 meters long, 30 meters wide, and 20 meters high.

[ 4 : 12 ] But maybe as important as that is that it was the biggest building Isaiah would ever have seen. So I think it's a bit like Isaiah saying that he would look at Celtic Park or Ibrox or Hamden and the train of the robe, big stadiums, and the train of the robe would fill the whole thing.

Would fill the whole thing. Or Fairhill, wherever. Okay. Okay. Now, these are just pictures to help us see how great God is. And then Isaiah sees the seraphim.

Now, I don't know whether you've ever seen a picture of seraphim, but sometimes people in the olden days drew them and they painted these sort of chubby babies with wings. Ridiculous. Okay. Seraphim are mighty angels.

The word means burning ones, burning ones. And Isaiah sees these mighty warriors with wings as though they're burning with fire. Maybe they'd have looked a bit like this picture here.

They've got six wings and they're mighty warriors. And the point for Isaiah is it was quite scary. Really scary. So maybe you can think of something you find scary. I was thinking of salty crocs.

[ 5 : 22 ] Salty crocs. Saltwater crocodiles. Look at that beast. They're extraordinary. I was watching a video last week on YouTube of a saltwater crocodile in a zoo and it stole a lawnmower.

It just snapped it in its teeth. So the zookeepers had to get this lawnmower back from the saltwater croc. So they had to go into the enclosure and one of them was holding a hunk of meat on a stick to distract the crocodile while his mates went in and got the lawnmower out.

It would have been quite scary. Quite scary. That's a bit like Isaiah must have felt when he saw these winged awesome warriors flying around, around the throne of God.

But compared to God, they're nothing. They actually have to cover their faces with their wings because they can't look at God because he's so incredible. He's so much mightier than them.

And in verse 4, he hears them crying out in worship to God. And as they cry out, it's so loud, there's an earthquake just from the noise that they're making.

[ 6 : 25 ] I don't know what the loudest thing is you've ever heard. What's the loudest thing you've ever heard? Maybe you can have a think. What do you think? My little sister screaming. Well, yeah, maybe you can think of a brother or sister screaming.

I had a better idea. Well, that is a great idea. But I had an idea of something that I could remember that was really loud. We used to live, before we moved to Glasgow, in a place where they make fighter jets.

And sometimes they'd fly them nearby. And one day, they flew one of these Eurofighter typhoons over the back garden of our house, quite low. And Hannah, our daughter, was two at the time.

And she was outside in the garden. And we heard this enormous noise as the plane was getting nearer. And it just got louder and louder and louder. And she fell on her knees in the garden.

She put her hands on her ears. And she was just shouting, loud plane, loud plane, loud plane, loud plane. It was terrifying, the noise. Well, Isaiah, he has these angels, the seraphim, shouting in worship.

[ 7 : 27 ] And there's an earthquake. The temple's shaking. The doorposts of the temple are shaking. So the light is blazing. The ground is shaking.

And then, boom. The temple gets filled with smoke.

Smoke comes when the glory of God is present. It might even be to keep us safe from seeing God, the smoke. But also because God is a God that's like fire in his purity.

And so the smoke shows us the presence of God. It's a bit like looking directly at the sun, like I said, with the light. It's not safe for us to look. So we just get smoke to show us that God is there in his blazing purity.

The whole scene is incredible. And then we hear the words the angels said to each other. They said, Now, the glory of God is how brilliant he is.

[ 8 : 35 ] And it's saying that God is so brilliant, the whole earth is full of how glorious he is. And they say, Holy, holy, holy. Are you okay? I'll ask you in a minute. Okay? Okay? They say, Holy, holy, holy.

Now, do you know why they say that? It's because in the language at the time, it was a bit different to how we talk today. Right? So if you see something that's big, what would you say?

You'd say it was big. If it was of a larger size than big, what would you say? You'd say, It's bigger.

And if it was larger still, you might say it's the biggest.

Big, bigger, biggest. Or if something's good, and then you see something that's... Best. You'd say, It's gooder. And then gooder. No, no. You say it's better. Good, better, best.

Big, bigger, biggest. Now, in Hebrew, which Isaiah understood, and the angels would have been speaking to help, he's listening to the angels, and they didn't say big, bigger, biggest, or good, better, best.

[ 9 : 32 ] If something was big, they just said it was big. And if it was really big, they said it's big, big. Or if something was really good, they said it was good, good. Or if you're feeling really happy, and someone said, How are you?

You'd say, I'm happy, happy. Or if you saw a hole, and it was a really big hole, you would say, It's a whole hole. Okay? That's how they spoke. But only once in the whole Bible is a word used three times to say, This is really, really as big as it gets.

And it's holy, holy, holy. It's saying God is more holy than we could ever imagine. And the word holy means set apart.

It's a bit like saying, he's different class. He's in a different league. Completely different league. It's a different game. Different sport. Holy, holy, holy. God is the creator of everything else.

Everything else has been created by him. He is the only thing that is not created. That's what it means when we hear holy, holy, holy. He's perfect in all his ways.

[ 10 : 35 ] He's perfectly good, perfectly loving, perfectly just. He's greater than we can imagine. He's the uncreated creator of all things. So, folks, the question for us when we see Isaiah seeing God is, Have you seen God?

Have you seen him like this? Isaiah turned up to a worship service in the temple, and the last thing he expected was to actually see God. Is that you this morning?

You know, you've come along for remembrance, but you didn't expect you'd see God. Well, we need to meet God in our lives. And it's not going to happen for most of us like it happened for Isaiah. But through Jesus, we can see God.

So that it's not just that we know about him. It's that he is real to us. He's contradicting us. He's challenging us. He's changing us. Is he real in your life like that, like he was for Isaiah?

Isaiah had that vision, and he was never the same again. Has that happened to you with God? So that you know that he's not just big, big, not just a bigger version of us, you know, the big man in the sky, the big man upstairs.

[ 11 : 39 ] He's not like that. He is holy, and we can't get near him. He's not God Almighty. He's God Almighty, beautiful, and terrifying, and glorious, and great.

And he grips us, and he changes your life when you've seen what he's like. Wow. You know, we've got more to think about with Isaiah in the temple, but now I'm just going to pray, and then we're going to sing to worship God.

So let me just lead us in a prayer. Father God, we worship you because you are awesome, and holy, and mighty, and terrifying, and beautiful, and majestic.

And when we think of what you look like to Isaiah, everything else in our lives seems different. The things we're afraid of don't seem so scary. The things that we desire don't seem so desirable.

Help us to see you more clearly. Open the eyes of our hearts. We want to see you. Amen. Now we're going to sing a song that takes up some of this language from Isaiah, and John's vision of him in Revelation as well of God.

[ 12 : 42 ] And we're going to sing of God's holiness. So let's stand. Let's get on our feet, and let's sing to God. How does it change you when you see God as holy? That's what we're going to hear in the next bit of our reading.

We're going to hear how Isaiah felt when he saw God. Stephen's going to bring that. We're back in Isaiah chapter 6, reading from verse 5. Okay, it's Isaiah chapter 6, verses 5 to 13.

And again, starting on page 691 of your pew Bibles. Woe to me, I cried.

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 Almighty.

Then one of the seraphim 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.

[ 14 : 02 ] Your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for. Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?

And I said, Here I am, send me. He said, Go and tell this people, Be ever hearing, but never understanding.

Be ever seeing, but never perceiving. Make the heart of this people calloused. Make their ears dull, and close their eyes.

Otherwise, they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed. Then I said, For how long, Lord?

And he answered, Until the cities lie ruined, and without inhabitant, until the houses are left deserted, and the fields ruined and ravaged, until the Lord has sent everyone far away, and the land is utterly forsaken.

[15:19] And though a tenth remains in the land, it will again be laid to waste. But as the terebinth and oak leave stumps when they are cut down, so the holy seed will be the stump in the land.

Thanks be to God. Thanks, Stephen, for reading. So Isaiah sees God, and did you notice what he said? He said, I am ruined. Why?

Because all his life, he's been comparing himself with other people, and he's thinking, I'm pretty cool. Isaiah was quite a talented man. He was an important man. He was a clever man.

Maybe he thinks, I'm one of the good guys. I'm clean. Maybe he thought, if I decide to follow God, he'll be glad to have me on the team. I'll be doing him a favor. Then he sees God, and he realizes he's not holy at all.

It's true for any of us. You might think of people you know, maybe people at school or at work or in your family, and think, compared to some people, I'm quite a good person. But one meeting with Jesus, with pure perfection, and we realize, war is me.

[16:28] I'm ruined. So Isaiah is terrified when he sees the goodness of God. We can't compare. It's a bit like last week, there was the Rugby World Cup final. South Africa were victorious.

They were big men. And in the front row of the scrum was one of the biggest of all, Tendai. Tendai Mtawawira, the beast, as he is called by his friends.

And after two minutes, the English prop, so the guy who goes in the scrum opposite Tendai, the English guy, had to go off injured. And they had to bring on someone else, Dan Coles.

And Dan Coles is pretty big and strong. But he got crushed. He got crushed. He got smashed. He didn't have the strength in his boots, and the strength in his arms to cope with Tendai. Just imagine that you were at the game in Japan, and when the English forward went off, Eddie Jones, the coach, had looked at you and said, I need you to go on and be in the front row up against South Africa's Tendai.

It would be terrifying, wouldn't it? You'd have no chance. You'd be thinking, water me, I am ruined. Well, Isaiah felt worse than that.

[17:44] This is God meeting us. Water me, I'm ruined. It doesn't even compare to you going on against Tendai in the rugby. It would be like Eddie Jones, the England coach, having to take his prop off and bringing on a hamster and saying, I've just got this hamster ref, and he's going to go in the scrum for me.

That's how ridiculous it is. There's no contest when it comes to us being with God. And Isaiah is packing up and he's ready to run away. And then something even more amazing happens.

In front of the temple, between Isaiah and the temple, is an altar where they used to bring animals and burn them to say sorry to God for their sin. And there's coals on the altar.

And one of the seraphim takes some tongs and they pick up one of the coals and he flies to Isaiah and the coal touches Isaiah's lips. And when it touches his lips, the seraphim, the angel, says this, this has touched your lips, your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for.

So thanks to the offering for sin, God is able to say to Isaiah, you are completely clean and you can be in my presence with me. It's the most wonderful thing that could have happened to Isaiah.

[19:00] And it's only possible because Jesus came and died on the cross. That was where God made the sacrifice so that any of us can come into his presence and we can have all our guilt taken away and our sin atoned for.

Jesus died for Isaiah's sin and my sin and your sin so that we can come back to God into his presence and not have to say, I'm ruined because Jesus was ruined on the cross in our place. And it means that we can hear God say to us, your guilt is taken away, your sin is atoned for, you're right with God. Then he hears a question. The question to Isaiah that God asks is, whom shall I send and who will go for us?

God wants a messenger to take to the world the news about him as king. And Isaiah says, here I am, send me. One minute, his face was hiding in the dirt.

He thought, I'm done for. The next minute, God sent him on an adventure to tell other people about him. And what's the job Isaiah has to do? Well, it's go and tell this people.

[ 20 : 10 ] In verse 9, Isaiah's told, go and tell this people. He's got to take God's word to the world. But in Isaiah's time, it was a difficult message. The people had turned away from God and they'd made other gods instead to worship.

And they were gods that they couldn't see and they couldn't hear and they didn't have real hearts. And so God gives them the punishment of blinding their eyes and blocking their ears and hardening their hearts so that they won't respond and turn back to him.

It shows us that if we're turning away from God, there comes a point where maybe there's no way back because God gives us what we've asked for. And today, we need to remember that one of the things that can freak you out if you're a Christian is that people around you maybe don't believe. You might be the only Christian in your class or in your year at school or in your department at work or in your family. And you think, well, what's that about? But we mustn't think that God's lost control. He is in control. He knows exactly what's going on. But it reminds us as well that when we hear God's word, it's a serious business. We have to listen and we need God's help to listen rightly, to have hearts that are open to hear him, eyes that are open to see him, ears that are unblocked to hear him.

[ 21 : 27 ] So when we hear God's word, let's not be casual about it or think that it doesn't matter. Let's ask for God's help that he would work in our ears and our eyes and our hearts so that we can hear him rightly.

If God gives us the hearts we need, then we can serve him like Isaiah did. He says, go and tell. And for Isaiah, that was go and tell about me, the king. And for us, Jesus says, go and make disciples. Turn people into followers of him by telling them all about who Jesus is, that he died for sins and rose to rule. Go and make disciples. So what do we all need this morning?

What do you need if you're not a Christian and you're still thinking about God and Jesus and the Bible? Or what do you need if you're a Christian but you're uncertain, you're counting the cost? You're not excited about being a Christian.

You find other things more exciting. What do we need? Well, we need holy, holy, holy. We need to see God. We need a fresh vision of God and what he's like.

[ 22 : 33 ] Woe is me, I am ruined. We need a fresh sense of how unclean we are before God, that we've got a big problem when it comes to God on our own. Your guilt is taken away.

We need a fresh grasp of God's grace that he forgives us in Jesus. It should mean so much to us that a holy God forgives us. And then God says, go and tell this people.

And Isaiah says, here I am, send me. And we say, let's go and make disciples. And all the people say, amen. Now we're going to pray now.

It's good whenever we pray, I think, a nice pattern, you don't have to do this, but a good pattern when we're praying is to do a wow prayer about how amazing God is, then a sorry prayer about us, then a thanks prayer, and then a please prayer.

And so I'm going to lead us in a prayer like that in response to God's word that we've heard. So let's start with a wow prayer. Wow, God, you are holy. We think about the noise of the angels worshipping you.

[ 23 : 36 ] We think about the earthquake, the throne, the train of your robe, the smoke, the seraphim. God, help us to see how holy you are. Sorry.

God, we are sorry that we are not holy, that we've not done the things we should have done, and we've done things we shouldn't have done. And on our own before you, we are ruined.

Now a thank you. God, we are amazed, and we thank you that you sent Jesus as a sacrifice to take away all our guilt and atone for all our sin. He is everything to us.

Thank you that it means we can have a friendship with you, the holy God. Thanks that you sent your Holy Spirit to open our eyes and open our ears and soften our hearts that we could turn and be saved.

Now a please prayer. God, please help us to keep going, even if the people around us won't turn back to you, even if people around us think nothing of you. Help us by the lives we live and the words we say and the love we show to share Jesus with others, to make disciples that others too might see your glorious majesty and know your amazing grace.

[ 24 : 53 ] We ask in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.