

Isaiah's Five Senses – Isaiah 6:1-8

I. Introduction:

- A. Permit me to use my imagination for a few moments. You can join me if you'd like.
1. I am picturing a young Hebrew man – one of sons of prophets – trained in one of the schools of Elijah.
 2. He already has some experience using his gifts of prophecy, preaching and prognosticating.
 3. On this occasion, he isn't preaching, but humbly standing in the courtyard of the temple of Solomon.
 - a. He is surrounded by the splendor of tapestries, gold, silver and polished brass.
 - b. There is the smell of slaughtered sacrifices, and there is still some blood which hasn't been cleaned up as yet.
 4. As I see it, the daily ministrations further inside the Temple, is coming to an end.
 - a. One-by-one the priests are finishing their duties, and some are coming out of the Holy Place, returning to the dying sunlight outside.
 - b. The singers and other musicians are slowly putting away their harps, psalteries and sackbuts.
 5. But this young man is not really paying any attention to any of that.
 6. He is deep in meditation and prayer.
 7. He has just spent a day doing prophet's work, teaching the Word of God, and now he is feeling its toll.
 - a. The good king Uzziah has recently died, and this man is concerned about the future of Israel.
 - b. Jotham is in line to become the next king of Judah, and this is not good news.
 - c. The nation is becoming more and more worldly and wicked.
 8. His sermons are going unheeded, and the people are sinfully running head-long towards catastrophe.
 9. Sometimes he wonders if he wouldn't be more productive plowing the soil and chopping weeds.
 - a. But he wasn't raised as a farmer.
 - b. He was born in the Holy city, and from there God called him into His service.
- B. As he is contemplating things – in the nearly empty Temple – the Lord lifts the scales from eyes.
1. It is as though he is looking through the walls into the Holy Place and even into the Holy of Holies.
 2. He becomes like the servant of Elisha, who was privileged to see that God's man was protected by God's horses and God's chariots of fire.
 3. In this case, without moving his feet, the young man seems to be carried into the Most Holy Place.
 - a. The whole temple is filled with the Lord and His glory.
 - b. He sees the Son of God, the pre-incarnate Christ, sitting on some sort of elevated throne.
 - c. The entire temple is filled with the skirt of His righteous – His royal robe.
 4. Amongst other angels, there are Seraphim hovering above the Lord, each with six wings.
 5. The very walls of the Temple shake with the words which they are saying.
 - a. They aren't shouting, but their voices are so loud, the young prophet isn't sure he won't be deafened.
 - b. *"Holy, Holy, Holy"* the Seraphim are saying.
 6. There is a haze and, yes, even a sweet and heavy odor of incense.
 - a. He detects the blend of ingredients he usually prefers when he goes to prayer at home.
 - b. He senses that the smoke filling the temple are his prayers and those of a thousand other saints.
- C. In the course of that vision and during the conversation which then began, the prophet Isaiah becomes a new kind of servant of God.
1. Or at the least, his ministry takes on a new character.
 2. This man becomes a servant with new intensity and zeal.
 3. His life in general, and his duty in particular, takes on an entirely different meaning for him.
- D. There is a verse found in the **Proverbs** which says, *"Where there is no vision, the people perish."*
1. Most people misunderstand the words, but Isaiah doesn't.
 2. Many think this is saying that we need to have a goal – a vision – an objective to shoot toward.
 3. But Isaiah knows it means, *"Where there is no revelation, where there is no Word of God..."*
 - a. *Where there is no vision, sight and awareness of the Lord...*
 - b. *The people – any people – every people – die."*

4. To be more precise, where there is no vision of God the people are already dead – because of trespasses and sins.
 5. The children of God will stagnate, suffocate and terminate when they are not being fed – when they are not feasting on the One who is the Word.
 6. And those who know not God will die the second death to be cast into Hell forever.
- E. My little story may be somewhat fictionalized, but there was such a man, and his name was “*Isaiah.*”
1. The prophet Isaiah one day, was taught, through a vision, to see things in a new and different light
 2. The Son which illuminated him was not in the sky above him, but in the Heaven’s above that.
 3. This was a lesson that no Bible school could teach him. Elijah himself couldn’t teach this lesson.
 - a. It didn’t come out of a theological text book – and not even out of the written Word of God.
 4. Isaiah saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up.
 5. And in the process, his senses became more acute than they had ever been before.
 6. I’m thinking of five very special senses – His sense of **God’s holiness**;
 - a. His sense of the **nearness of God**; His sense of **sin**;
 - b. His sense of **forgiveness and cleansing**; and his sense of **urgency**.
- F. How I wish that we – that I – might have our senses come alive to these things as Isaiah did.

II. First, let’s think about Isaiah’s sense of the **NEARNESS** of God.

- A. Isaiah was not doing anything that was especially out of the ordinary on that day of his great vision.
1. Sure he was in temple, but he wasn’t **doing** anything particularly special.
 2. It may have been his practice to visit the temple just before sun down every day.
 3. And, despite the popular opinion, God’s temple was just a building, made by men’s hands.
 4. There isn’t any thing particularly divine about a temple or a church building.
 5. God can reveal Himself in a church auditorium, on a street corner, or in a jail, because He is omnipresent.
 6. & conversely God may **NEVER** reveal Himself in thousands of buildings which are called “*churches*” today.
 7. So there was nothing particularly significant about the place where Isaiah was when he saw the Lord.
 8. Nevertheless, in this case, and at this time, he was made alive to fact of presence of Jehovah.
- B. Other men, mentioned throughout the Bible, have had the privilege of spectacular meetings with the Lord.
1. For example, **Moses** was tending sheep in the desert, when God bade him take off his shoes because that little patch of desert was made holy by the presence of the Holy God.
 2. **Elijah** was hiding in a cave in the Sinai wilderness when God revealed Himself to him in a still, small voice.
 3. The **disciples** were about to have their boat swamp in the middle of a lake, when they were treated to a revelation of God.
 4. **Jacob** was trying to sleep at Penuel, and **Joshua** wanted to survey the defenses of the city of Jericho.
 5. Over and over again, rather ordinary men have been confronted with the nearness of God.
- C. And there is deity in this auditorium this morning, whether or not you are privileged – or you choose – to see.
1. He is not here in the pantheistic, new age, sense in which everything makes up some fictitious deity.
 - a. The pew upon which you are sitting is not God, and that ceiling fan is not the Lord.
 - b. That is not what I am talking about.
 2. And yet, the personal, omnipresent, omnipotent Spirit of God is present with us here and everywhere.
 3. David said in **Psalm 139** – “*Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?*”
 - a. *If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there.*
 - b. *If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea;*
 - c. *Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me.*
 - d. *If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me.”*
 4. You cannot avoid God’s presence – your sin cannot avoid His sight – you cannot escape His eye.
 5. But **you can choose not to CONSIDER His presence.**

6. Have you ever been in a medium-sized crowd when you spotted someone you hadn't seen for a while?
 - a. You tried to make eye-contact, but that person seemed to be ignoring you, deliberately looking away.
 - b. Perhaps you loudly cleared your voice, or tried to step into his line of sight, but still he ignored you.
7. The Lord experiences this continually – even from you.

D. Jehovah knows you more intimately than you know yourself.

1. If you are hurting this morning, don't think for a moment that God is unaware of your pain.
 - a. And remember that the Son of God has experienced every kind of pain possible – except the pains of sin and guilt.
 - b. He understands the pain of rejection, of a broken heart, loneliness, and misunderstanding.
2. Are you plotting to sin against someone? God knows details of your plan more intimately than you do.
3. Are you afraid that your prayers are not being heard?
 - a. Oh, maybe your lack of faith is hindering your own ears – you **are** being heard in Heaven.
 - b. Even if your sin is thwarting the answer you want – you are still not unheard.
4. God knows your thoughts in the same way He knows what viruses there are in your body, days before they manifest themselves.
5. He knows everything about you.
6. **What if we knew that He knows?** What if we remembered that He never forgets?

E. There is not a person here whose life would not be different living with the sense of the nearness of God.

1. Would those words which you used yesterday in your anger have left your lips, if you had remembered that the omnipresent God was listening?
2. Would you be so pessimistic and depressed if you reminded yourself that God in His omnipotence is here?
3. Perk up, O Christian, the Lord is with you.
4. We should all look around – because as Paul says, *“He be not far from everyone of us.”*

F. **But** – if you are not a child of that omnipresent God, then it is time to fear.

III. In addition to His presences, Isaiah got a fresh sense of the HOLINESS and GLORY of God

A. I'm sure that just like each of us, Isaiah had heard that Jehovah is **the infinitely HOLY God**.

1. He knew the doctrine; he had sung the songs; he knew the rules of life which the holy God had laid down.
2. But, the holiness of the Lord is not just a doctrine or a song.
3. It refers to a positive separation between God, in His perfection, and anything in its sinfulness – even us.
4. The infinite God is both near and far at the same time, closer to us than the blood in our veins.
5. But at the same time He is infinitely separated from sin and the sinner.
6. Perhaps that can **only** be said of God, but it **IS** said of God.

B. Think of a surgeon, preparing for delicate heart or brain operation – his patient's life depends upon his skill.

1. He has his team of assistants – all especially chosen by himself and proven to be efficient.
 - a. The patient himself has been properly prepared – physically and emotionally.
 - b. The hour arrives when they all meet in the operating room – fully ready for a dangerous surgery.
2. Then with an eye trained to discover such things, one of the nurses surveys the implements.
 - a. She notices a slight blemish – a mark – on one of the scalpels to be used to open up the man's flesh.
 - b. It might be nothing more than a sterile anomaly on a perfectly good instrument.
 - c. But it is, without hesitation, cast aside because the patient's life is at stake – this surgery demands **perfect** sterility.
3. Our God is infinitely more spotless and **“sanitized”** than an hospital operating theater.
 - a. But not in a cold antiseptic sort of way.
 - b. He is holy – not for the sake of the dying man – but for Himself.

- C. Jews, like Isaiah, knew that the word *"holiness"* literally refers to a special kind of *"separation."*
1. But God's is not merely some sort of **negative** separation from the corruptions of sin and rebellion.
 2. It's not the same separation which will be our theme in this evening's message.
 3. This holiness is coupled to God's resplendent glory – it is **positive not negative**.
 - a. *"Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his GLORY."*
 - b. *"And we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."*
- D. A few weeks ago we asked why it was that the angels cried *"holy, holy, holy"* back and forth to each other.
1. Preachers like to eloquently say that this is an intimation of the Trinity.
 - a. God the Father is holy; God the Son is holy; and God the Holy Spirit is holy.
 - b. And without a question, it is true, each person of the Trinity **IS** absolutely holy.
 - c. But even A.H. Strong, J. P. Boyce, John Gill, and a whole family of Hodges will have a hard time proving that from this passage of scripture.
 2. All right then, why is *"holy"* repeated three times?
 - a. Could it be for the same reason that God said, *"Saul, Saul why persecutest thou me"?*
 - b. Is it for the same reason that He repeated Martha's name and Abraham's name?
 - c. Is it for same reason that in **Jere. 22:29** He said, *"O earth, earth, earth, hear the Word of the Lord."*
 - d. And same reason in **Ezekiel 21**, He said, *"I will overturn, overturn, overturn."*
 3. This *"Holy, holy, holy"* may be nothing more than a **triple barreled emphasis** of the holiness of God.
 - a. Those angels may have been saying, *"Don't you dare miss this every important fact."*
 - b. *Whatever you picture God's holiness to be, this is holiness must be raised to the third power."*
- E. **How** essential it is to recognize the essential holiness of God?
1. As far as I am concerned it is the first of all God's attributes and the foundation of all the others.
 2. Jehovah is unapproachable by anyone and anything in this fallen and corrupt creation.
 3. The people of Bethshemesh properly asked, *"Who is able to stand before this holy Lord God?"*
 - a. The question was rhetorical. The answer is that none can stand before Him.
 - b. Because *"all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags."*
 4. Every person who doesn't recognize the holiness of the Lord is in serious trouble.
 5. I'm speaking of the positive and glorious separation which exists between you and the Lord.

IV. And in the light of that, something else Isaiah began to sense ever stronger was **HIS OWN SINFULNESS**.

- A. *"Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts."*
1. This is the flip side of the previous point.
 2. God is holy, and that makes Him absolutely and essentially different from us.
 3. The sad fact is that this creation is now a **"googol"** of miles from perfect.
 - a. The company named **"Google"** derived its name from **"googol."**
 - b. A googel is the number 1 followed by a hundred zeros – which is a lot more than a trillion trillions.
 - c. Today's creation, today's world, and all the people in it are a googol of miles from the holiness of God.
 4. We have all been tainted, corrupted, ruined by sin so thoroughly that we can't imagine that separation.
 - a. You can call it by a hundred different names; you can paint it in a thousand shades of grey or black.
 - b. But sin is sin.
- B. And from where does a sense of sin come?
1. From a comparison to the standard – the **proper** standard.
 2. And what is that proper standard? It is God in His absolute holiness.
 3. Please don't mis-understand this point:
 4. If you and I aren't as perfectly holy as God Himself, we shall be cast into Hell.
 - a. *"If a man, any man, keep the whole law and yet offend in one point he is guilt of all."*
 - b. The tiniest infraction of the least of God's laws proves us to be law-breakers.
 - c. And wages of every sin is death – eternal death, the second death, which is lake of fire.

5. Deny the Bible and turn your head away if you like, but those are the facts.
6. **Ezekiel 18:4** – *“Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die.”*
7. You will never rise any higher than a burning lump of coal in God’s eternal fire – until you come to a realization of your own sin.

C. There is yet another sense in Isaiah which God activated and to which Isaiah grasped –

V. That young prophet had a fresh sense of the **FORGIVENESS** and **CLEANSING** of God’s grace.

- A. Do you see the important chain that is being forged here?
 1. It began with a vision of God –
 2. There was a sense of God’s inescapable nearness and then it morphed into God’s absolute holiness.
 3. Then from that there flowed down a sense of the prophet's sinfulness.
 - a. A sinfulness in Isaiah which couldn't even stand the thought of his own tongue.
 - b. And keep in mind that Isaiah was the cream of the crop in his day – not a common preacher or pastor, but an especially-called prophet of God.
 4. Beyond the realization of the sinfulness of sin, came a sense of forgiveness and cleansing.
- B. As you know, there is an entire pseudo-science which has been developed to help sinners cope with guilt.
 1. In Isaiah's case, he didn't even really know that he was guilty until he saw the Lord, high and lifted up.
 2. Yet, this man was at the right place at the right time to deal with it.
 3. He was at the throne of the Lord Jesus; not the psychiatrist's couch.
 4. When he abased himself before the Lord; when he acknowledged and repented of his sin, then an ambassador of the Lord was sent to minister to his lips and the soul which lay behind those lips.
 5. An angel came to Isaiah with a coal from God's altar, probably still bearing a few sprinkles of the blood of the last sacrifice.
 6. That altar meant a great deal to those Old Testament Jews like Isaiah.
 7. But to the New Testament saints, who saw Jesus nailed to the cross, the image of the altar was altered.
 8. No longer was it the **brazen** altar, but **the wooden stake** upon which the Son of God was hung.
- C. If we brought a large semi-flat rock into this church and began to slaughter sheep and goats as offerings to Jehovah....
 1. If we tried to go back to some semblance of Old Testament ritual, God would spit on this place and walk away.
 2. Today, there is only one sacrifice, and only one altar.
 - a. The altar is Calvary and the sacrifice is the Lord Jesus who was crucified there.
 - b. *“Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.”*
 - c. Today, *“it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sin.”*
 3. Those verses are found in the New Testament book of **Hebrews**, probably written by the Apostle Paul.
 - a. Paul had been a member of one of the strictest, most self-righteous, sect of the Jews in his day.
 - b. But by the grace of God his altar was changed from rock – or brass – to the cross of Christ.
 4. He said, *“in Christ we have redemption from our sin, through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins.”*
 5. The Apostle Peter said, *“God the Father has exalted Christ for to give repentance & forgiveness of sins.”*
 6. The Apostle John said, *“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”*
- D. Isaiah may not have known the details on how God could forgive sins, but knew the reality of forgiveness.
 1. By the 53rd chapter of his book, he knew more.
 2. I can assure you from the Word of God that if you will acknowledge your sins as this prophet did.
 3. If you will repent of your sins – squarely facing their hideousness before God.

4. And if you will turn to the blood shed on Calvary, accepting it as **your** sacrifice.
 5. Those things will prove that God is dealing with you as He was with Isaiah.
 6. Such things are a proof that God has forgiven you of your sins and made you a new spiritual creature.
 7. The Lord has promised that *“if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the LORD Jesus and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved”* – delivered.
 8. Christ Jesus said, *“Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word and believeth on him that sent me hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.”*
- E. After Jehovah was finished with him, Isaiah had a sense of forgiveness.
1. And so can you.
 2. The Apostle John wrote *“These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.”*
 3. Would you like to know the forgiveness of sin?
 4. Then turn to Christ this morning in humility and faith.
 5. Look at Christ Jesus, high and lifted up on His cross – His throne of salvation.
 6. Please, I urge you, repent before God; put your faith in the Lamb of God this morning.