

Sermon #88 — John's Gospel

Title: **“WHEN HE SAW HIS GLORY”**

Text: John 12:41

Subject: *Isaiah's Vision of Christ's Glory*

Date: Sunday Morning — June 20, 2010

Tape: John #88

Reading: *Revelation 4:1-5:14 or 14:1-20*

Introduction:

John 12:41 is a text that God the Holy Spirit has been burning into my heart for many, many weeks. I believe he has given me a message for you from it. — John 12:41. — **“These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory, and spake of him.”** This verse of Inspiration tells us something very remarkable about a man who lived a long, long time ago. — He saw the Lord's glory. Imagine that! This man, Isaiah, saw the glory of God! That is what I want to tell you about this morning. The title of my message is found right here in our text: — **“WHEN HE SAW HIS GLORY.”** Oh, what a subject! May God the Holy Spirit be our Teacher this hour, causing his servant to speak nothing but his own word to you. Oh, may he give you ears to hear and a heart to believe. How I pray that he will give us eyes to see the glory of our great God, the Triune Jehovah.

“WHEN HE SAW HIS GLORY.” What happens when a person sees his glory? Let's turn to the 6th chapter of Isaiah, the passage to which our text refers, and see what happened

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when Isaiah saw the glory of the Lord. — **“WHEN HE SAW HIS GLORY.”**

(Isaiah 6:1-13) “In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. ² Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. ³ And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, *is* the LORD of hosts: the whole earth *is* full of his glory. ⁴ And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke. ⁵ ¶ 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. ⁶ Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, *which* he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: ⁷ And he laid *it* upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged. ⁸ Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here *am* I; send me. ⁹ ¶ And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. ¹⁰ Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest

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they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed. ¹¹ Then said I, Lord, how long? And he answered, Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate, ¹² And the LORD have removed men far away, and *there be* a great forsaking in the midst of the land. ¹³ But yet in it *shall be* a tenth, and *it* shall return, and shall be eaten: as a teil tree, and as an oak, whose substance *is* in them, when they cast *their leaves: so* the holy seed *shall be* the substance thereof.”

- This is a picture of a sinner’s conversion experience.
- This is a picture of a believer’s inspiration and motivation in life.
- This is a picture of God sent revival.
- This the making of a prophet!

Isaiah was a prophet of God who lived about 700 years before our Savior’s incarnation. He lived about 120 years and preached for about 85 of those years. He was a prophet in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.

KING UZZIAH

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First, we are told that this vision was given to Isaiah in the year that his cousin, King Uzziah, died (v. 1). — *“In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw also the Lord.”*

Is there some connection between the death of King Uzziah and Isaiah’s vision of God’s holiness? Perhaps!

Uzziah was a great and successful king whom Isaiah appears to have admired (2 Chronicles 26:22). He reigned in Jerusalem for 52 years. In all those years, he did that which was right in the sight of God - (2 Chronicles 26:1-5).

- He was Isaiah’s cousin, as well as his king.
- Isaiah loved him and, perhaps, almost idolized him.

But King Uzziah died under the curse of God (2 Chronicles 26:16-20). This King Uzziah did many great and notable things. — *“As long as he sought the Lord, God made him to prosper”* (2 Chronicles 26:5). But, in time, he became proud and presumptuous. He thought he had become strong. Oh, how weak we are when we think we are strong!

When King Uzziah thought he was strong, his pride led him to the temple to offer incense to God, not through God’s priest but by his own hand. **This was, at least symbolically and ceremonially, a denial of the holiness of God and the work of Christ, our great High Priest** (2 Chronicles 26:16-20).

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(2 Chronicles 26:16-20) “But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction: for he transgressed against the LORD his God, and went into the temple of the LORD to burn incense upon the altar of incense. ¹⁷ And Azariah the priest went in after him, and with him fourscore priests of the LORD, that were valiant men: ¹⁸ And they withstood Uzziah the king, and said unto him, It appertaineth not unto thee, Uzziah, to burn incense unto the LORD, but to the priests the sons of Aaron, that are consecrated to burn incense: go out of the sanctuary; for thou hast trespassed; neither shall it be for thine honour from the LORD God. ¹⁹ Then Uzziah was wroth, and *had* a censer in his hand to burn incense: and while he was wroth with the priests, the leprosy even rose up in his forehead before the priests in the house of the LORD, from beside the incense altar. ²⁰ And Azariah the chief priest, and all the priests, looked upon him, and, behold, he *was* leprous in his forehead, and they thrust him out from thence; yea, himself hasted also to go out, because the LORD had smitten him.”

Christ alone is God’s Priest (typified by the Old Testament priesthood). Not even a king can come to God except

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through him (John 14:6). God judged Uzziah and he died a leper.

That great man suffered a great fall. No doubt, Isaiah was devastated. But this was all by the gracious hand and purpose of God. **God destroyed a king that Isaiah might see The King.** God took away his earthly comfort, strength, and help, so that Isaiah might know him and find his comfort, strength, and help in him. — It was in the year that King Uzziah died that Isaiah saw the Lord.

THE REVELATION OF GOD

Next, when Uzziah was dead, Isaiah was granted a revelation of the Lord of Hosts, the Triune Jehovah (vv. 1-4).

(Isaiah 6:1-4) “In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. ² Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. ³ And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, *is* the LORD of hosts: the whole earth *is* full of his glory. ⁴ And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke.”

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Our text, John 12:41, tells us that **this revelation of God was a revelation of the glory of God in Christ**. It was the enthroned Christ, the sovereign Christ of all authority and glory that he saw. He saw the Lord Jesus Christ as the enthroned Mediator, the exalted Redeemer, the Savior King in all the glory of his accomplished redemption. Isaiah saw Christ in all the fulness of his mediatorial glory.

This passage, and John’s inspired explanation of it with one sweet sentence (“*These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory, and spake of him.*”) explains all the revelations of God to his people throughout the Scriptures. **We are told plainly that no man can see Jehovah’s face and live** (Exodus 33:20; 1 Timothy 6:16). Yet, we are often told of chosen men and women seeing the Lord and seeing his glory...

- Jacob at Bethel
- Moses (Exodus 3, 33-34, and 40)
- Monoah and His Wife

That One in and by whom those blessed saints of old saw the glory of God, that One in and by whom alone we see the glory of God in this day of grace, and in and by whom we shall see the glory of the Triune God in the eternal world to come is our Lord Jesus Christ, the God-man, our Mediator, our Savior and our God (John 1:18; 2 Corinthians 4:6).

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(John 1:18) “No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared *him*.”

(2 Corinthians 4:6) “For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to *give* the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”

Isaiah saw the triumphant, victorious Christ. — He was sitting on a throne. Men and nations rush to and fro; we pace the floor and fret and worry. He sits amid complete order and purpose, in the ease and serenity of his absolute sovereignty (Isaiah 46:9-11; Psalm 110:1).

(Isaiah 46:9-11) “Remember the former things of old: for I *am* God, and *there is* none else; I *am* God, and *there is* none like me, ¹⁰ Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times *the things* that are not *yet* done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure: ¹¹ Calling a ravenous bird from the east, the man that executeth my counsel from a far country: yea, I have spoken *it*, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed *it*, I will also do it.”

(Psalms 110:1) “The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit

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thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.”

Isaiah saw the infinite glory of Christ, possessing all the reward of his accomplishments as Jehovah’s Servant and our Savior. — **He saw him “high and lifted up.”** His name and throne are above every name and throne. — *“None can stay his hand or say unto him what doest thou?”* (Philippians 2:9-11).

(Philippians 2:9-11) “Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: ¹⁰ That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of *things* in heaven, and *things* in earth, and *things* under the earth; ¹¹ And *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ *is* Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

Isaiah saw the universal glory of Christ. — **His glory and presence “filled the temple.”** — *“Christ is all and in all.”* Every revelation of God to human eye, ear, or heart is Jesus Christ (John 1:18). Isaiah saw Christ, the Lord, exalted King of kings and Lord of lords! He is the unrivalled Lord and King of the universe, — *“The Lord of Hosts!”* He has and constantly exercises power over all

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flesh, to give eternal life to chosen, ransomed sinners by his omnipotent mercy!

THE SERAPHIMS

Third, around the throne Isaiah saw the seraphims (v. 2). Who are these seraphims? The word “*seraphims*” means “burners.” Some say they are as heavenly creatures. Others say they are angels. But, if you compare Isaiah’s vision with the same vision as it was given to and recorded by the Apostle John in Revelation, it seems obvious to me that the seraphs are given here to represent faithful gospel preachers. — Angels are not sent to proclaim pardon (Isaiah 6:7); but gospel preachers are (Isaiah 40:1-2; 52:7).

(Isaiah 40:1-2) “Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. ² Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the LORD’S hand double for all her sins.”

(Isaiah 52:7) “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!”

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(Isaiah 6:2) “Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly.”

They cover their faces in modesty and humility before the Lord; for they are less than the least, unworthy to be ministers, and the chief of sinners.

They cover their feet, conscious of their sin, the imperfection of their walk, conduct, and ways. — “*O wretched man that I am!*” is the relentless cry of the heart of every man who knows and speaks for God.

With two wings they fly in haste to declare the gospel of Christ’s glorious person and work.

What is their cry? — “*Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory*” (vv. 3-4). **God is his holy**. God is love. God is just. God is merciful. But “*holy and reverend is his name.*” All that God is and does must be in agreement with his holiness. Nowhere is the holiness of God revealed more than at Calvary, when his holiness demanded and carried out the death of his Son to redeem his people from their sins (Romans 3:25-26).

(Romans 3:24-26) “Being justified freely by his grace

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through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: ²⁵ Whom God hath set forth *to be* a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; ²⁶ To declare, *I say*, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.”

No doubt, this threefold cry, “*Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts,*” has reference to the three Persons of the Holy Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost (1 John 5:7).

“The whole earth is full of his glory!” — Without question, the whole earth is his; all that is in it and all creation shall serve his glory (Revelation 4:8-11). The greatness and glory of his eternal power and godhead is made known in all creation. The glory of God fills the earth in the daily execution of his will in divine providence. But here, these seraphs, these gospel preachers are declaring that the gospel of the holy Lord God shall fill all the earth. It shall be preached everywhere, among all nations. The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord; and his kingdom will be everywhere, even from sea to sea, and from the rivers to the ends of the earth.

“And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke” (v. 4). — This

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moving of the door posts was a part of Isaiah’s vision. Like everything else in this chapter, it speaks of Christ’s glory.

- Perhaps it refers to the shaking of the consciences of men by the preaching of the gospel.
- Perhaps it is symbolic of the shaking and removing of the legal dispensation, the shaking and removing of the temple service and worship, at the death of Christ, and by the preaching of the Gospel.

ISAIAH’S CONFESSION

Fourth, in verse 5, we see and hear Isaiah’s confession. What happens when a sinner sees God’s glory? Look at Isaiah’s response to this revelation of God’s presence and glory, and you will see (v. 5).

(Isaiah 6:5) “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.”

He saw himself. — He saw his guilt and just condemnation before the holy Lord God. — “*Woe is me, for I am undone!*” “I am undone and ruined; I am a sinful man; I am reduced to silence.” A man may look at others and say, “*I thank thee, I am not like other men.*” He may look at the written law and say, “*I am blameless.*” But when a man is

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exposed to the absolute holiness and righteousness of God, he must cry, “*Woe is me!*”

He saw the evil of his heart and mouth. — “*I am a man of unclean lips!*” Unclean lips speak from an unclean heart. The lips are the outlet of the heart.

And he saw the total ruin of the human race (Roman 3:10-19; Psalm 14:2-3).

(Romans 3:10-19) “As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: ¹¹ There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. ¹² They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. ¹³ Their throat *is* an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps *is* under their lips: ¹⁴ Whose mouth *is* full of cursing and bitterness: ¹⁵ Their feet *are* swift to shed blood: ¹⁶ Destruction and misery *are* in their ways: ¹⁷ And the way of peace have they not known: ¹⁸ There is no fear of God before their eyes. ¹⁹ ¶ Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.”

(Psalms 14:2-3) “The LORD looked down from

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heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, *and* seek God. ³ They are all gone aside, they are *all* together become filthy: *there is none that doeth good, no, not one.*”

The two-fold cry of the word, of the gospel, of those who have seen the Lord is: (a) “*All flesh is grass*” and (b) “*Behold your God*” (Isaiah 40:6-9).

(Isaiah 40:6-9) “The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh *is* grass, and all the goodliness thereof *is* as the flower of the field: ⁷ The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the spirit of the LORD bloweth upon it: surely the people *is* grass. ⁸ The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever. ^{9,1} O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength; lift *it* up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God!”

The sinfulness of sin, the inability of the flesh, and the need of sovereign mercy are only discovered in the light of God’s holiness. Job experienced this (Job 42:5-6) and so shall all whom God is pleased to bring to a saving knowledge of Christ Jesus.

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(Job 42:5-6) “I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. 6 Wherefore I abhor *myself*, and repent in dust and ashes.”

INIQUITY PURGED

Fifth, in verses 6 and 7, we see that when the Lord God reveals himself to chosen, redeemed sinners iniquity is purged in the sweet experience of God’s saving grace.

- Yes, our iniquities were purged by the blood of Christ at Calvary.
- But guilt remains on the consciences of redeemed sinners until it is experimentally purged by God the Holy Spirit making the gospel effectual to our hearts in the experience of his saving operations.

(Isaiah 6:6-7) “Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, *which* he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: 7 And he laid *it* upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged.”

God revealed to Isaiah, the sinner, his mercy and grace. When he saw the holiness of God, realized his corruption and sin, and confessed both his guilt and inability, the mercy and grace in the crucified Christ was effectually

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applied to his heart and conscience. His conscience was sprinkled with the blood.

- **Self-judgment always precedes forgiveness** (1 John 1:8-10).

(1 John 1:8-10) “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰ If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.”

- **Grace is only for the guilty; Christ died only for the ungodly** (1 Timothy 1:15; Romans 5:6-8).

(1 Timothy 1:15) “This *is* a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.”

(Romans 5:6-8) “For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷ For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. ⁸ But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”

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- **The seraphim** which came to him was a picture of a gospel preacher, who comes to men sent of God (John 1:6-7). God sent Philip to the eunuch (Acts 8:29-30).
- **The live coal in his hand is the glorious gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ** — his word of grace, the good news of mercy, grace, and salvation in him (Isaiah 40:1-2; Romans 10:13-15; Ephesians 1:13).

(Isaiah 40:1-2) “Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. ² Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the LORD’S hand double for all her sins.”

(Romans 10:13-15) “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. ¹⁴ How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? ¹⁵ And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!”

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(Ephesians 1:13-14) “In whom ye also *trusted*, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, ¹⁴ Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.”

- **The gospel we preach is the power of God unto salvation** (Romans 1:16-17).

(Romans 1:16-17) “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. ¹⁷ For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.”

- **The altar of fire from which the live coal was taken is the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ.** The Passover lamb was roasted on the altar of fire as our Lord Jesus (who is our Passover) was sacrificed for us. He endured the fire of God’s wrath for us, when he was made to be sin for us, bearing our sins in his own body on the tree (2 Corinthians 5:21). The pardon of sin, the cleansing, the power of God to redeem come from the blood of Christ at Calvary (Hebrews 10: 12-17).

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(Hebrews 10:12-17) “But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; ¹³From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. ¹⁴For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. ¹⁵*Whereof* the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that he had said before, ¹⁶*This is* the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; ¹⁷And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.”

“He laid it upon my mouth.” — That cleansing, purging fire of Calvary, the blood of the Son of God, actually met our sins, came in contact with all our iniquity, engaged to purge, burn out, and eradicate all our transgressions (Isaiah 53:4-6). — *“He bore our sins;”* and, blessed be his name forever, he effectually bore them away!

- **“Thine iniquity is taken away and thy sin purged.”** — Your sin is completely atoned for, forgiven, and gone!. God said, *“I will remember their sins no more.”* How can this be? Only in Christ, our Substitute! God can be holy, just, and righteous and justify us only in Christ. He obeyed the law, giving us a perfect righteousness (Romans 5:19); and he died (the just for the unjust) to bring us to God (1 Peter 3:18). — Mercy and truth are

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met together; righteousness and peace kiss at Calvary (Psalm 85:10).

There is another beautiful picture of this whole transaction of God’s saving grace in Zechariah 3.

(Zechariah 3:1-10) “And he shewed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him. ²And the LORD said unto Satan, The LORD rebuke thee, O Satan; even the LORD that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: *is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?* ³Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the angel. ⁴And he answered and spake unto those that stood before him, saying, Take away the filthy garments from him. And unto him he said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment. ⁵And I said, Let them set a fair mitre upon his head. So they set a fair mitre upon his head, and clothed him with garments. And the angel of the LORD stood by. ⁶And the angel of the LORD protested unto Joshua, saying, ⁷Thus saith the LORD of hosts; If thou wilt walk in my ways, and if thou wilt keep my charge, then thou shalt also judge my house, and shalt also keep my courts, and I will give thee places to walk among these that stand by. ⁸¶ Hear now, O Joshua the high priest, thou,

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and thy fellows that sit before thee: for they *are* men wondered at: for, behold, I will bring forth my servant the BRANCH. ⁹ For behold the stone that I have laid before Joshua; upon one stone *shall be* seven eyes: behold, I will engrave the graving thereof, saith the LORD of hosts, and I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day. ¹⁰ In that day, saith the LORD of hosts, shall ye call every man his neighbour under the vine and under the fig tree.”

A WILLING SERVANT

Sixth, and I have to wrap this up here, we see that when the Lord God reveals himself to a sinner, that sinner becomes his willing servant (v. 8).

(Isaiah 6:8) “Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here *am* I; send me.”

Who will go with the message of substitution and satisfaction through the person and work of Christ? Only the man whose lips have been touched by the experience of grace, with that fire from the altar, will willingly serve the Lord God. — “**Here am I, send me.**” I know, I have experienced, and I love that gospel. Send me!

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EDDIE RICKENBACHER

Have you ever read the story of Eddie Rickenbacher? — Imagine this scene: You are on the Florida coast, not far from a little town near Jacksonville called Switzerland. The sun is setting like a gigantic orange ball. It’s a cool evening on a vacant, isolated stretch of beach. The water is lapping at the shore, the breeze is blowing slightly. There are one or two joggers and a couple of fisherman. Most people have gone home for the day.

You look up and you see an old man with bent shoulders, bushy eyebrows, and bony features hobbling down the beach carrying a bucket. He carries the bucket out onto a pier. He stands there and you notice he is looking up into the sky and all of a sudden you see a mass of dancing dots. You soon recognize that they are seagulls. They are coming out of nowhere. The man takes out of his bucket handfuls of shrimp and begins to throw them on the dock. The seagulls come and land all around him. Some land on his shoulders, some land on his hat, and they eat the shrimp. Long after the shrimp are gone his feathered friends linger. The old man and the birds.

What is going on here? Why is this man feeding seagulls? What could compel him to do this--as he does week after week?

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The man in the scene is Eddie Rickenbacher, a famous World War II pilot. His plane, “The Flying Fortress,” went down in 1942 and no one thought he would be rescued. Perhaps you have read or heard how he and his eight passengers escaped death by climbing into two rafts for thirty days. They fought thirst, the sun, and sharks. Some of the sharks were nine feet long. The boats were only eight feet long. But what nearly killed them was starvation. Their rations were gone within eight days and they didn’t have anything left.

Rickenbacher wrote that even on those rafts, every day they would have a daily afternoon devotional and prayer time. One day after the devotional, Rickenbacher leaned back and put his hat over his eyes and tried to get some sleep. Within a few minutes he felt something on his head. He knew in an instant it was a seagull which had perched on his raft. But he knew that they were hundreds of miles out to sea. Where did this seagull come from? He was also certain that if he didn’t get that seagull he would die. Soon all the others on the two boats noticed the seagull. No one spoke, no one moved. Rickenbacher quickly grabbed the seagull and with thanksgiving, they ate the flesh of the bird. They used the intestines for fish bait and survived.

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Eddie Rickenbacher never forgot that visitor who came from a foreign place. That sacrificial guest. Every week, he went out on the pier with a bucket of shrimp and said thank you, thank you, thank you.

That’s what you and I are called to do in response to God’s grace and mercy in Christ.

(Romans 12:1-2) “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, *which is* your reasonable service. (2) And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what *is* that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”

Amen.