

Encountering the Holiness and Grace of God (Isaiah 6:1–8)

Asking God to begin with us

Please open your Bible to **Isaiah 6**. Let's prepare our hearts for a fresh work of God. Today we will consider what happens when a person comes face to face with the holiness and grace of the Lord. Our desire is to become more responsive to the Lord who has already shown us such extraordinary mercy.

When we speak about revival, we are asking God to renew His people in their love for Him and their obedience to His Word. We want the Holy Spirit to awaken us where we have become spiritually dull. We want to be honest about sin, grateful for grace, and willing to follow Jesus wherever obedience leads. God remains free to work in His own wisdom and timing. Our responsibility is to receive what He says and yield ourselves to Him.

It is easy to think about the places where somebody else needs to change. We can identify problems in the country, concerns in the church, and failures in people we know. Some of those concerns may be entirely valid. Yet when we open this chapter, we meet a man who is brought to an honest understanding of his own condition. Isaiah sees the Lord, and in that light he sees himself. That is a good place for us to begin.

There may be someone here who has served the Lord for many years and remembers a tenderness toward Him that seems distant now. You still believe the gospel. You know where the books of the Bible are, and you can explain truths that once made you weep with gratitude. Somewhere along the way, however, disappointment or busyness has crowded your fellowship with Jesus. You may be wondering whether that tenderness can return. This passage gives us reason to come before God with hope.

Someone else may be hearing these things for the first time. You are uncertain what it means to know God, and talk about holiness may sound threatening. Stay with the passage. The God who reveals Isaiah's sin is also the God who provides his cleansing. We need to hear the whole movement of

the account, because the grace of God becomes wonderfully clear when we understand the seriousness of the need it meets.

Before we read, let us ask the Lord to help us receive His Word. Father, give us an honest heart before You. Help us understand what You have revealed and trust what You have promised. Where we have become defensive, make us teachable. Where we are ashamed and afraid to come near, help us see the mercy You have provided through Your Son. Lead us into willing obedience as we listen. In Jesus' name, amen.

READ ISAIAH 6:1-8

The Lord remains on His throne

Look first at **Isaiah 6:1**. The opening places this encounter in the year of King Uzziah's death. A human reign has ended, and Isaiah is shown the Lord enthroned in majesty. We do not have to invent Isaiah's private emotions to feel the importance of that setting. The death of a king marks a real change in a nation's life. People who have organized their expectations around a familiar ruler must now face what comes next.

The account of Uzziah in **2 Chronicles 26** records both remarkable strength and a disastrous expression of pride. His life is a reminder that human achievement never makes a person independent of God. We can be helped by capable leaders and grateful for what they accomplish, while remembering that every earthly leader remains accountable to the Lord. Isaiah's vision directs our attention to the King whose authority does not expire when an earthly administration ends.

That matters to us because uncertainty has a way of occupying the center of our thoughts. We may be concerned about the direction of the country, the condition of a loved one, the future of our family, or the responsibilities we carry. A concern that deserves our attention can gradually become the thing around which we organize our whole emotional life. We wake up thinking about it, check for updates throughout the day, and carry it into bed at night.

Scripture gives us a larger reality within which to face those concerns. **The Lord is reigning.** Isaiah sees the majesty of His presence filling the temple. God has not become smaller because the circumstances on earth have become uncertain. His character remains steady, His knowledge remains complete, and His authority remains sufficient for the responsibilities He gives His people.

We have watched a child get frightened by something adults understand more clearly. A parent does not have to explain every detail before the child can begin to settle. The child needs to know who is present and whether that person can be trusted. Our relationship with the Lord includes real questions and sometimes prolonged grief. Yet knowing who holds us changes how we carry what we cannot understand.

God's sovereignty does not mean every painful event is good, or that we can confidently explain why He has permitted a particular loss. The Bible gives room for grief. What it does give us is a trustworthy God to whom we can bring the pain. We can seek Him honestly without pretending to know what He has chosen not to reveal.

For a church seeking renewal, this is foundational. We need a clearer understanding of the Lord we worship. Our confidence can become attached to a familiar pastor, a particular ministry structure, a building, or the stability of our finances. Those things have their place, but they cannot carry the weight of our faith. The church belongs to Jesus, and every person who serves in it serves under His authority.

That includes me as I stand before you. My responsibility is to open His Word faithfully and point you to Him. A pastor needs the correction and encouragement of Scripture just as the congregation does. When God speaks through His Word, all of us are hearers. We come under the same truth, and all of us depend on the same grace.

Consider how that could change an ordinary church decision. Before defending the way we have always done something, we could ask whether it serves what Christ has commanded. Before reacting to criticism, we could examine whether there is something true in it. Before making a promise, we could pray and consider whether we are being faithful with what He has entrusted to us. The reign of God has practical implications for the way His people live together.

Isaiah begins with the Lord on His throne. As we continue, we discover that the majesty of this King includes a holiness that reaches far beyond our ordinary comparisons between good people and bad people.

Receiving the holiness of God with reverence

In **Isaiah 6:2–4**, Isaiah describes the seraphim attending the Lord.

In **Isaiah 6:2**, we see the seraphim, who are heavenly beings who attend the Lord's throne, worship Him, and carry out His will. The word *seraphim* is plural; one is called a *seraph*. Their name is commonly understood to mean “burning ones,” coming from a Hebrew word associated with burning. It is a fitting name for these magnificent servants in a scene filled with the glory and holiness of God.

Isaiah tells us that each has six wings. Two cover the face, two cover the feet, and two are used for flight. Although the passage does not explain the symbolism of every detail, their posture conveys profound reverence. These heavenly beings stand near the throne, yet they cover themselves before the Lord. Their nearness to God has not diminished their awe of Him. They worship with humility and remain ready to serve.

That gives us something to consider as we ask God to renew our love for Him. We can become so familiar with church, Scripture, and ministry that we begin to handle sacred things casually. We can sing words about God's greatness while giving Him very little of our attention. These seraphim remind us that knowing God more deeply should deepen our reverence. As we understand more of His goodness and majesty, our gratitude should grow, and our hearts should become more responsive to His Word.

Their service also reveals something beautiful about the relationship between holiness and grace. Later, in **Isaiah 6:6–7**, one of these same beings brings a coal from the altar, touches Isaiah’s lips, and announces his cleansing. The heavenly servant who proclaims God’s holiness also participates in bringing God’s assurance of forgiveness to a man who has confessed his sin.

As we watch the seraphim, our attention is drawn toward the Lord they serve. Their worship helps us understand the greatness of the One before whom Isaiah stands. Listen now to what they proclaim about Him.

The words at the center of their praise are **Isaiah 6:3**, “*Holy, holy, holy.*” The repetition emphasizes the incomparable holiness of God. He is utterly pure and altogether distinct from His creation. His holiness includes complete freedom from evil, and it also reminds us that He cannot be reduced to a larger version of ourselves. We receive our understanding of Him from what He reveals.

God never needs to disguise a motive or revise an account of what happened. There is no dishonesty in Him, no cruelty hidden behind a gracious appearance, and no impulse toward evil that He must struggle to conceal. Everything He does is consistent with His perfect character. We sometimes use the word holy so often that we forget what a remarkable comfort that is. The One who knows everything about us is perfectly righteous in all His dealings.

His holiness also confronts our habit of deciding what is acceptable by comparing ourselves with other people. We may find someone whose conduct seems worse than ours and feel reassured. That comparison tells us very little about our condition before God. Scripture gives us His character and His commands as our reference point. Once we begin to see Him more clearly, excuses that once sounded persuasive lose their force.

Think about examining a room in poor light. The room may appear clean enough until daylight enters and reveals what was difficult to see. The light has not created the dust. It has made the existing condition visible. In a similar way, the Lord's Word can expose attitudes we had learned to

overlook. We may discover that what we called discernment included contempt, or that what we called protecting ourselves had become a settled refusal to forgive.

That exposure is an opportunity for grace. We do not have to resent the light. We can thank God that He is showing us something He intends us to address. A person who wants renewal learns to listen when Scripture unsettles a comfortable assumption. The question becomes whether we are willing to receive the truth when it reaches a place we would rather leave undisturbed.

The shaking and smoke in **Isaiah 6:4** communicate the overwhelming reality of this encounter. We should receive them as part of Isaiah's vision, without trying to reproduce the outward features as a method of securing God's presence. The passage calls us to reverence. Reverence can be expressed in heartfelt singing, quiet attention, sincere prayer, and prompt obedience. Its reality is measured by how seriously we receive the Lord.

There is a warmth in knowing God as Father, and there is a proper awe in remembering who our Father is. Jesus brings us near to God without making God ordinary. Because of Christ, a believer can approach with confidence. That confidence rests on the Savior's provision and belongs together with humility. We have access to a holy God through a gracious Redeemer.

For some of us, a practical response will begin with the way we approach Scripture during the week. We can slow down long enough to ask what the passage reveals about God and what response it calls for from us. We can carry one clear truth into the day and return to it when we are tempted to react according to habit. A small amount of Scripture received attentively can search places that a hurried reading leaves untouched.

We can bring the same attentiveness into worship. When we sing about His faithfulness, we can consciously entrust a real concern to Him. When we sing about His mercy, we can remember what He has forgiven. Worship becomes deeply personal as the truth about God is received by a heart that is

responding to Him. Isaiah's vision now shows us what that response looks like when holiness reaches the conscience.

Becoming honest about our own sin

In **Isaiah 6:5**, Isaiah recognizes his uncleanness and the uncleanness of the people among whom he lives. His encounter with God brings him to personal confession. He does not speak as an observer who is safely removed from the problem. He stands before the Lord as someone who needs mercy himself.

That is a searching lesson for anyone who teaches, leads, or has spent a long time in church. Familiarity with spiritual language can make it easier to discuss sin in general while avoiding a particular sin in our own life. We can explain repentance with accuracy and still resist it in a relationship where we believe we have been treated unfairly. Isaiah's response invites us to let the truth become personal.

He specifically identifies the uncleanness of his lips. The text does not give us a list of statements he had made, so we should not supply one as though we know it. It does, however, direct attention to his speech. Jesus teaches in **Luke 6:45** that our words reveal what is stored in the heart. Speech is therefore an important place to examine what has been happening within us.

We might begin with the words spoken when we are inconvenienced and do not have time to arrange a careful impression. Consider the way we speak at home or describe someone who has disappointed us. Our tone with a person who has little ability to benefit us or resist us also deserves attention. Those ordinary moments can reveal attitudes that remain hidden during a polished public conversation, and the Lord can help us face them honestly.

Suppose a man speaks graciously at church and then repeatedly humiliates his wife at home. He may think the two settings are separate, but they belong to one life lived before God. Repentance would require him to acknowledge his conduct without blaming her for provoking it. It would include receiving correction, taking practical steps to change, and giving her room to see

whether his actions become consistent with his words. The Lord cares about the life behind the public appearance.

Or consider someone who passes along information that damages another person. Each retelling may be presented as concern, but the effect is to spread suspicion. An honest response to God might include stopping the conversation, correcting a false impression, and apologizing to the person harmed. Confession becomes meaningful as it moves us into obedience. The Holy Spirit is able to bring a particular situation to mind while we sit under the Word.

Isaiah also acknowledges his place among a sinful people. There is a way to grieve the condition of the church or the country that includes humility about our own participation. We can pray for the Lord to address pride in the nation while allowing Him to address pride in us. We can desire truthfulness in public life while becoming more careful with the facts we repeat. Personal repentance gives integrity to the concerns we express about others.

This does not require us to pretend that every wrong is equally ours or to accept responsibility for something we did not do. Honest confession is truthful and specific. It acknowledges our actual choices. A person who has been sinned against needs care and protection; the wrongdoing of another person does not become that person's guilt. God sees clearly, and we honor Him by telling the truth clearly.

There is also a difference between the conviction that leads us toward Christ and the hopelessness that tells us we are beyond mercy. Conviction exposes what needs to be brought into the light. The gospel gives us a place to bring it. If the only conclusion we draw is that we are too damaged to approach God, we have stopped reading before the grace in this passage appears.

Some people have carried a memory of failure for years. They have confessed it to the Lord, yet they continue to live as though forgiveness is permanently out of reach. Others have protected a current sin by reassuring themselves that it is not serious. The Word addresses both conditions. It gives

no shelter to our excuses, and it gives strong hope to the person who comes to God through Jesus Christ.

The application for our congregation is straightforward, although it can be difficult. We can ask the Lord to make us willing to name what we have been avoiding. Perhaps there is a conversation to have, an accountability relationship to begin, or a dishonest practice to end. We do not have to invent a dramatic response. We need to obey the truth God makes clear.

As a pastor, I want us to be a people among whom a person can ask for help before the damage grows worse. That requires maturity from those who receive the confession. We need to respond truthfully and carefully, with the aim of restoration. Some situations require immediate protective action and the involvement of appropriate authorities. Others call for patient counsel and ongoing support. In every case, love takes the person's real need seriously.

Isaiah has become honest about his condition. He has no cleansing of his own to offer. At this point in the passage, the action turns toward him from the presence of God, and that is where we see the beauty of grace.

Receiving the cleansing God provides

Follow the movement in **Isaiah 6:6–7**. One of the seraphim approaches Isaiah with a coal taken from the altar. The coal touches the very place Isaiah has confessed as unclean, and he receives the assurance that his guilt has been addressed. God provides what Isaiah could never supply for himself.

We should pay attention to that order. Isaiah's service follows the cleansing he receives. The Lord meets him in his need before sending him into his assignment. If we reverse that movement in our own thinking, we begin trying to earn peace with God through religious activity. A person can become very busy in ministry while inwardly wondering whether enough work will finally make him acceptable.

The gospel gives a different foundation for our service. **Ephesians 2:8–10** teaches that salvation is God's gift, received through faith, and that those who belong to Christ are created for a life of good works. Grace establishes the relationship from which obedience grows. We serve because we have been shown mercy, and our service becomes an expression of gratitude and love.

The altar in Isaiah's vision belongs to the biblical setting of worship and the dealing with guilt. We should not force every detail of the coal into a separate prediction about Jesus. The larger truth is clear: a holy God provides cleansing for a guilty person. As the Scriptures unfold, we see the full provision for sinners in the death and resurrection of the Son of God.

Later in **Isaiah 53:4–6**, the prophet describes the suffering Servant who bears the sins of others. In **1 Peter 2:24**, Peter applies the truth of Christ's sin-bearing work to the lives of believers. Jesus willingly bore our sins at the cross. His sacrifice deals with the guilt that our best intentions and strongest resolutions cannot remove.

Think about the difference between promising to do better and having a debt actually paid. A promise about tomorrow does not erase an obligation that already exists. Our sin brings a real moral debt before God, and a future improvement cannot rewrite the past. Christ's finished work is sufficient for the guilt we carry. Forgiveness rests on what He has accomplished.

That is why we can speak honestly about sin without making despair the final word. The Savior's mercy is not fragile. He does not discover something about us that escaped His knowledge when He went to the cross. He knows the whole truth and calls us to come to Him. The person who trusts Christ is received on the basis of His righteousness and His sacrifice.

The assurance given to Isaiah is important. He is told what God has done. A tender conscience needs the truth of God's promise. Feelings may take time to settle, particularly when a person has lived under shame for many years. The foundation for assurance remains the faithfulness of the One who promises forgiveness to those who come through His Son.

This is also where our first love can begin to warm again. In **Revelation 2:1–7**, Jesus addresses a church whose labor and discernment coexist with a serious loss of love. He calls them to remember, repent, and return to their earlier obedience. Remembering includes bringing the truth of His grace back before the heart. We can become so occupied with our responsibilities that we rarely pause to consider the mercy that first drew us to Him.

Take a moment to consider what forgiveness means. The God who knows every motive and every hidden act has provided a righteous way to receive you through His Son. You can approach Him without inventing a better version of your past. You can be known completely and loved faithfully. As those truths become personal again, gratitude has room to grow. Love for Christ is nourished by receiving the love He has already shown.

There is a danger in prolonged self-examination if we never lift our attention back to the Savior. We may begin measuring the intensity of our sorrow and wondering whether we have felt badly enough to be forgiven. Scripture directs our trust to Jesus. Repentance matters deeply, but its sincerity is expressed in turning toward Him and responding to His Word. We are received because He is sufficient, and His sufficiency gives us courage to be honest.

A believer seeking renewal can therefore spend time in the Gospels with a simple purpose: to know the Lord more clearly. Watch the way He receives a sinner who comes honestly. Consider His patience with the disciples and His willingness to go to the cross. Let the account of His resurrection strengthen your confidence that He is alive and able to keep you. The Holy Spirit uses the truth about Jesus to deepen our faith and affection.

This also helps us distinguish the new birth from the renewal of a believer's fellowship with God. A person who has never trusted Christ needs to receive Him in faith. A believer who has become cold or disobedient needs to return to a responsive walk with the Savior. We should speak clearly to both. Long attendance at church does not replace personal faith, and a believer's season of struggle does not mean the sacrifice of Christ has become insufficient.

As we pray for our congregation, we can ask the Lord to work in each person according to that person's actual need. He knows who is hiding behind religious familiarity and who is quietly longing for reassurance. He knows the exhausted servant and the comfortable hearer who has avoided obedience. We do not have to force everyone into one description. We can faithfully present the Word and trust the Spirit to apply it with a wisdom far greater than ours.

For the believer who has sinned, **1 John 1:9** directs us to confess our sins and rely on God's faithfulness in forgiving and cleansing. Confession includes agreement with God about the wrong. It also includes receiving His provision with humility. We dishonor the sufficiency of Christ when we insist that our failure is somehow greater than His ability to forgive.

Forgiveness does not erase every earthly consequence. A broken trust may need time to be rebuilt. Money may need to be repaid. A person may need to step away from responsibility while receiving care and demonstrating change. Those realities belong to a truthful response to sin. They can be faced with hope because the repentant believer is dealing with them in the care of a merciful Father.

We need this understanding in ministries that walk with people through addiction and the rebuilding of life. A person may have many practical repairs ahead. Family members may have good reasons to move carefully. The gospel gives that person a secure place to begin, along with the responsibility to walk truthfully. We can celebrate God's grace while helping someone take patient, accountable steps toward maturity.

Something else deserves our attention. The Lord addresses the area Isaiah has confessed as unclean, and then He gives Isaiah words to carry. The place of acknowledged weakness becomes a place where God's grace prepares him to serve. We should be careful about promising a particular ministry to everyone with a particular history. Still, there is real hope here for anyone who assumes that failure must have the last word.

Christ is able to redeem a life and make it useful in ways the person could never have produced alone. The humility learned in receiving mercy can make us more patient with another struggling person. The comfort we receive can equip us to offer comfort. We remain dependent on grace throughout that process. Our story serves the gospel when it points beyond us to the Savior who has been faithful.

Isaiah now stands as a man who has received cleansing. The next verse brings him into a willing response to the Lord's call, and we need to see how naturally that response grows out of mercy.

Offering our lives in response to grace

In **Isaiah 6:8**, the Lord speaks about sending someone, and Isaiah responds, *“Here am I! Send me.”* There is a personal availability in those words. He is willing to place himself at God's disposal. The man who has just confessed his uncleanness now trusts the grace he has received enough to offer himself for service.

The singular and plural language in God's question is striking. As Christians, we read this within the full revelation of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. At the same time, we do not need to claim that this one verse by itself explains the doctrine of the Trinity. The immediate emphasis is the Lord's call and Isaiah's willing answer. God is the One who sends, and Isaiah is the servant who responds.

Notice that Isaiah has not yet heard all the details of the assignment. He is entrusting himself to the Lord whose holiness and mercy he has encountered. That does not mean believers should make careless commitments without seeking wisdom. It does mean our willingness to obey should be rooted in the character of God, rather than depending on a guarantee that the work will be easy.

This is where seeking revival becomes very practical. We may sincerely want God to renew the church while holding tightly to a place where His will conflicts with our preference. The Lord may be dealing with the way we use

our time, the resentment we have kept alive, or our reluctance to serve a person who cannot advance our interests. A renewed heart becomes increasingly available to Him in those ordinary places.

For one person, availability may mean faithfully caring for an aging family member with a gentler spirit. For another, it may mean learning to open the Bible with a younger believer. Someone may need to seek reconciliation, and someone else may be called to serve beyond familiar surroundings. We should let the Lord define obedience through His Word, the responsibilities He has given us, and the wise counsel of mature believers.

There is room in this response for different capacities. A person living with illness may have very limited physical strength. A parent caring for young children may already carry substantial responsibility. God knows the circumstances of the people He calls. Willingness means offering Him the life we actually have, including its limits, and trusting Him to direct it faithfully.

We also need to read what follows. In **Isaiah 6:9–13**, Isaiah receives a difficult commission. His hearers will persist in resisting the truth, and the passage describes severe judgment while preserving a word of hope beyond it. This is not an account in which a willing prophet is promised an immediate national awakening. The chapter itself prevents us from turning Isaiah's response into a formula for guaranteed public success.

That context helps us understand faithful ministry. We pray for people to repent and believe. We desire to see families restored and the church renewed. We also keep obeying when the response is slower than we hoped. The Lord has not lost His authority because someone refuses to listen. A faithful servant continues to speak truth with love and leaves the outcome in God's hands.

Some of you have prayed for a loved one for a long time. The years can make your heart weary. This passage does not authorize me to promise a particular date or outcome. It does encourage you to remain near the Lord

and faithful in what He has given you to do. He sees the love behind those prayers, and He is able to sustain you as you continue to seek Him.

For our church, the same truth should shape our expectations. We can ask boldly for a fresh work of the Holy Spirit while keeping our hands open concerning how that work becomes visible. A quiet confession that leads to lasting change matters. A relationship that begins to heal matters. A believer who learns to trust Christ through suffering matters. God sees the full significance of what He is doing in people.

We should therefore be willing to examine the fruit over time. Look for a growing readiness to receive the Word and speak truthfully with love. The people closest to us should begin experiencing the patience and humility we speak about in church. Their experience can help us recognize whether our response to God is reaching the actual shape of our lives.

The chapter has brought us from the throne of God to the availability of His servant. His holiness has exposed the need, and His grace has provided the cleansing. We can now bring that truth into our own response to Jesus.

Coming to Christ and responding to His Word

There is a beautiful connection in **John 12:37–41**. As John describes unbelief in the face of Jesus' ministry, he refers to Isaiah's message and says that Isaiah saw His glory. John directs our attention to the majesty of Christ. The Savior who came humbly among us is worthy of the worship of heaven. His gentleness toward sinners belongs to the glory of the holy Son of God.

If you have never trusted Him, hear the good news clearly. God made you to know Him, and your sin has separated you from Him. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, entered our world, lived without sin, and willingly died for sinners. He rose bodily from the dead and is alive today. He calls you to turn from sin and place your trust in Him for forgiveness and new life.

You do not have to repair your entire history before coming. You need to come honestly, relinquishing your claim to rule your life and relying on His

mercy. The beginning of the Christian life is faith in Christ. Baptism, fellowship, and a growing life of obedience follow as you learn to walk with Him. We would be glad to help you take those next steps.

For those who already belong to Jesus, consider what He has made clear today. Perhaps you need to stop defending a pattern of speech that wounds others. Perhaps you need to receive the forgiveness you have confessed you believe. Perhaps the Lord is calling you to become available in a place you have repeatedly avoided. Bring that response into prayer, and then make a concrete plan to obey.

During the coming week, take time with **Isaiah 6:1–8** again. Ask what the passage reveals about the Lord and where your response needs to become more honest. If a specific matter requires action, speak with the appropriate person or ask a trusted believer to help you follow through. Give the truth enough room in your life to become more than a memory of a Sunday message.