

“The Holy Seed” (Isaiah 6:1–13)(4.26.20)

Isaiah 6:1–13 (NIV84) *Isaiah’s Commission*

6 In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple. ² Above him were seraphs, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. ³ And they were calling to one another:

“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty;
the whole earth is full of his glory.”

⁴ At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke.

⁵ “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.”

⁶ Then one of the seraphs flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. ⁷ With it he touched my mouth and said, “See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for.”

⁸ Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?”

And I said, “Here am I. Send me!”

⁹ He said, “Go and tell this people:

“ ‘Be ever hearing, but never understanding;
be ever seeing, but never perceiving.’

¹⁰ 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.”

¹¹ Then I said, “For how long, O Lord?”

And he answered:

“Until the cities lie ruined
and without inhabitant,
until the houses are left deserted
and the fields ruined and ravaged,

¹² until the Lord has sent everyone far away
and the land is utterly forsaken.

¹³ And though a tenth remains in the land,
it will again be laid 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.”

The word of God for the people of God.

Title: **“The Holy Seed”**

LET US PRAY.

INTRODUCTION:

Thursday night, I accidentally found myself watching a documentary about Franklin Delano Roosevelt. It caught my attention on several levels, but I will just give two. He was a victim of the polio epidemic; and, for the largest portion of the Great Depression, he was President of the United States. I wonder if there are parallels for today?

Who can predict the future? But, we can learn from the past. How are we going to come through this global pandemic? What lessons can we learn from the past?

I ask for your patience now as I am going to take some time in setting up a correlation between the scripture and the nation we live in today.

BODY:

Charles Fiske, who called himself a “puzzled parson” made this astute observation: “America has become almost hopelessly enamoured of a religion that is little more than a sanctified commercialism; it is hard in this day and this land to differentiate between religious aspiration and business prosperity. Our conception of God is that he is a sort of Magnified Rotarian. Sometimes, indeed, one wonders whether the social movement and the uplift in general have not become, among Protestants, a substitute for devotion; worse than that, a substitute for real religion.

Efficiency has become the greatest of Christian virtues. I hope I may be forgiven a note of exaggeration that is necessary to make my meaning clear when I say that Protestantism, in America, seems to be degenerating into a sort of Babsonian cult (referring to Babylon), which cannot distinguish between what is offered to God and what is accomplished for the glory of America and the furtherance of business enterprise.”

The Puzzled Parson said this at the end of the roaring 20’s and just before The Great Depression. Five years later, well into the Depression, Edwin Lewis was looking to explain the demise of the Protestant Church:

“We borrowed our criteria of evaluation from the world about us—a world gone mad in its worship of mere size, a world that had set itself to create bigger ships, bigger airplanes, bigger locomotives, bigger buildings, bigger universities, bigger corporations, bigger banks, bigger everything—except men! . . . And we were guilty of the incredible folly of supposing that “Christ’s church was of this world,” to be judged by the world’s standards, to be modeled on the world’s ways, to walk in the world’s procession, and to keep step to the crashing discord of its brazen [blasting music].”

Yes, it happened over and over again in the history of Israel. When the LORD would bless, similar to the prosperity of our Roaring Twenties, the nation would feel that it no longer needed God. Knowing that, I naturally assumed that the Great Depression must have been ripe for revival; so, I was reading some of our history. Why wasn’t there revival during the depression?

Robert T Handy summed up the 1930’s like this: “First, an already depressed Protestantism was overtaken by the economic crisis. Without inner changes it was unable to deal with the needs of the time in a fresh and creative way. The changes that finally came did contribute to conspicuous currents of renewal, but only after the depression itself had passed.”

“Second, there had already been many defections from the mainline Protestant Churches. The splits and defections had multiplied and riddled their strength. These breakaway groups were seeking true religion that they felt was no longer part of the larger Protestant Church.”

“Third, and closely related, was that the largest part of the Mainline Protestant Churches and their leadership had embraced liberal theology. As they began to look more and more like the humanists and the naturalists, those very groups attacked them. After all, the humanists and naturalists could articulate their own message far better than it was being represented in the Protestant Church.”

OK, let me dispel a myth that underlies the presuppositions of this historical review. It has to do with the concept of the United States being a Christian nation. Over these last several years, faithful Christians have been lamenting that America is no longer considered a Christian nation. Hold onto your seats and be prepared to be upset.

The whole idea of a Christian nation is a vain pursuit of Shangri-La. There is no such utopia or thing. It is a deceit of Satan and our own self-glorification. Why do I say such an outrageous thing? We find it in today’s scripture and often repeated throughout scripture. The reality is the remnant, the faithful

remnant. The reality is the faithful few. Here in Isaiah 6, the LORD gives it as 10% of the people. The LORD calls them His Holy Seed.

Are you among the remnant? Are you God's Holy Seed? Do you want to be The Holy Seed? How do you know? What does the Holy Seed look like?

- How we Worship God is a great indicator of our relationship with our heavenly Father.
 - We are given a picture of heavenly worship. The Lord is on the throne of the universe. Always has been and always will be. He is high above. God is exalted. Even these great mysterious seraphs, which means flaming or burning ones, cannot compare to the glorious God.
 - Likewise, the Holy Seed should be on fire for God. We should burn for God. Praise and worship should be part of our identity. Our refrain should be Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty. And, these are not just words on our lips. We are to be true worshipers who worship in spirit and truth. We are to be reverent. We are to be in awe of God's magnificent majesty and glory.
 - When we see God this way, humility is the only response possible. We are not worthy to look upon the fullness of God's goodness. We want to cover our own unworthiness. The seraphs modeled this behavior for us.
 - The daily prayer guide that is posted in the Emmaus Faithlife group always starts with Adoration of the Lord. We pray the scriptures that praise and worship our wonderful Lord.
- With this proper attitude, we are led to Repentance
 - Woe to Me! I am undone! Isaiah's eyes are opened. He sees himself and his people as they really are. A burning heavenly coal, administered by a burning heavenly being, purifies and makes clean. His confession and cleansing makes him presentable to God.
 - If people's hearts are soft; if they hear; if they see; if they understand; then they will turn and be healed. We must turn away from the way we used to live and live in the Way, the Truth, and the Life.
 - Mark 2:17 (NIV84) On hearing this, Jesus said to them, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."
- Serving the King is expected
 - This chapter opens with "the year that King Uzziah died. All human kings die. All human leaders die. All human dynasties come to an end. All human institutions come to end. Where do we put our trust? In earthly things? Or in the eternal things of God?"
 - But there is a king over all kings & Lord of lords.
 - Here I am, send me. Isaiah volunteers. He has heard the call of the LORD and his heart is moved to respond. Every Christian is called. Few are called to be prophets. But everyone is called and gifted to serve the Body of Christ. The Holy Seed is living out their calling.
- Speaking God's message isn't always easy.
 - Isaiah volunteered before he heard the specifics of his commitment. This shows his obedience. This shows humility. Isaiah gives up his life to gain his life. It isn't about us. Our duty is to God and our service is in the kingdom of God.
 - Likely, it won't be easy. Lord, you want me to do what? You want me to proclaim that? That is hard for people to receive God.
 - How long, O Lord? Now, the message gets even more arduous. Because people won't pay attention, they will have to pay the penalty. The Lord's reply is terribly harsh. Cities and fields will be ruined. Cities and homes will be deserted. The land will be utterly forsaken. We don't hear this God preached. This Lord is hard to market to the masses.
 - A woman this week told me that she read the Book of Revelation for the first time. Her husband corrected her and reminded her of a previous time they had listened

to Revelation being read. She responded, “NO, I didn’t really hear it then. When I read it for myself this time, I really understood. It is scary. I think that everyone needs to read it and be scared.” The Bible supports her opinion. Proverbs 9:10 (NIV84) “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.

- We have been in quarantine for COVID-19 for several weeks and many are asking, how much longer? The Great Depression lasted a decade; and, it was followed by World War II. Can you imagine how many times God heard that question, “How long, O Lord?”
 - Then after all that devastation, God did something that was considered impossible. The nation of Israel was reestablished in 1948. The LORD was starting something new.
- What are the Results of a Hardness of Heart?
 - No matter what, some will not listen
 - This is not the desire of God’s heart. In Acts 26:18 (NIV84) Jesus tells Paul, “I am sending you to the Gentiles, to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.’
 - But the reality of the human heart is that people will reject Jesus. They might convince themselves that they will come to Jesus later. Or, their hearts may become impenetrable. They refuse to repent. They resist understanding the truth.
 - Let me correct a misconception – most people WILL NOT respond to the good news of Jesus. In selling our Commercialized Christianity, we operate our churches in a way that denies this reality.
 - Matthew 7:13–14 (NIV84) ¹³ “Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. ¹⁴ But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.”
 - Luke 13:22–25 (NIV84) Then Jesus went through the towns and villages, teaching as he made his way to Jerusalem. Someone asked him, “Lord, are only a few people going to be saved?”
- He said to them, “Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to. Once the owner of the house gets up and closes the door, you will stand outside knocking and pleading, ‘Sir, open the door for us.’
- “But he will answer, ‘I don’t know you or where you come from.
- “Then you will say, ‘We ate and drank with you, and you taught in our streets.’
- “But he will reply, ‘I don’t know you or where you come from. Away from me, all you evildoers!’
- There will be no excuse; no argument will work. But Lord, but Lord...
 - There will be no escape. Jesus continued in the passage from Luke 13: “There will be weeping there and gnashing of teeth.”
- There is a Hope of the Holy Seed
 - In the ruined and deserted cities, in the ruined and deserted lands, the forest will be cut down. There will be only stumps. But from those stumps will spring new life. It will be a life that comes from God’s Holy Seed.
 - Are you God’s Holy Seed? Your heart and soul must be worshipful. You cannot be lukewarm. You need to be on fire for the Lord. Have you turned your life around? Repentance has a reoccurring aspect. Because our faith journey is a process, we may start down a wrong path. As soon as possible, we need to repent and turn back. God’s holy seed must be willing to serve God by serving our neighbors. Telling them the truth will be part of that; but, we must

also minister to their needs. They may not ever respond to God's love, which you are living out. Nevertheless, The Holy Seed serves. Their response is between them and God.

CONCLUSION:

Francis P. Miller wrote, "The plain fact is that the domestication of the Protestant community in the United States within the framework of the national culture has progressed as far as in any western land. The degradation of the American Protestant church is as complete as the degradation of any other national Protestant church."

What the church should therefore do was stated by H. Richard Niebuhr in these words: "We live, it is evident, in a time of hostility when the church is imperiled not only by an external worldliness but by one that has established itself within the Christian camp. Our position is inside a church which has been on the retreat and which has made compromises with the enemy in thought, in organization, and in discipline. Finally, our position is in the midst of that increasing group in the church which has heard the command to halt, to remind itself of its mission, and to await further orders."

In the 1950's there was a surge in growth in the Protestant Church. Preachers like Billy Graham led the way. It was a time of economic prosperity. The institution of family was celebrated. Today, we look back on that decade as the glory years for the Protestant Church. Again, nationalism and Christianity were conjoined.

The tide has turned heavily and the Church has hit hard upon the rocks. WE need the hand of God to move again. Won't you be among the remnant? Are you the Holy Seed? Do not let your ears be dull, your eyes closed, or your hearts calloused.

Amen and amen. Let us pray.