

Hot Lips
John 3:1-17 and Isaiah 6:1-8
Bon Air PC – 30 May 2021

When I was a child, about ten years old, I **burned** down a **house** in my village... I and a few of my buddies. It was an old, two-story frame house in which no one lived... although it **was** chock-full of **stuff**. And one day, a bunch of us broke in through a back door to take a **look** at the stuff... to explore and have some fun. It was dark in there... but someone found a few candles to use as we walked around... and a couple of firecrackers, too, that we couldn't **resist** setting **off** in the house **before** we left to do something **else** for the rest of the day. The pack moved on.

I was at **home** later on... getting ready for bed... when I looked out my bedroom window and saw, to my absolute **horror**, the house going up in flames. *O my **God**, I thought – my heart sinking to the pit of my stomach. O my God. I am toast.*

I don't know if **you've** ever experienced anything like that... but I can say for sure that **Isaiah** did. He was, of all places, in the **temple** one day... when, looking up, he saw the **Lord** seated upon a throne, with angels hovering overhead, hailing God as *Holy, Holy, Holy*. Smoke filled the room... (and where there's smoke, there's fire). And the floor of the temple shook at the sound of those voices. *O my God, I can well imagine Isaiah thinking. O my God, I am toast... for I am unclean, and so is everyone I know. And I hope to God there is someplace here where I can hide.* Isaiah **was** hoping, I'm certain, that he wouldn't be seen. He was hoping that **maybe**, with all the smoke, he could slip away unnoticed. But that was not to be. One of the **seraphs** spotted him and, taking a white-hot coal from a brazier, headed right at him... directly toward his shabby, shaking self. I'll bet Isaiah winced... just as the heat hit his face. So, he didn't **see** what happened. But, surely, he **felt** it. And **then** he heard the seraph telling him **what** he'd felt. *This has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin is now forgiven.*

Good God Almighty, I'll bet Isaiah thought, as he wrapped his mind around what had occurred. I am forgiven?! I'm OK?! I am here and I'm OK!? O my God!

That day in the temple Isaiah **discovered** that in the heart of the **Holy One**, there was tenderness... for those like him. There was forgiveness. There was grace.

And have **you** discovered that, as well? Have **you found** God's **grace** being extended to **you**... at some moment, in circumstances when you **thought** that **you** were toast... that you were lost, a goner, for sure? *Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be white as snow.*

Have you **realized**, as **Nicodemus** must have, that God has come into the world in Christ **not** to **condemn** the world, but to **save** it... for life with him?

When we discover the **forgiveness** in the heart of the Holy One... when we **realize** that **forgiveness** is **where** our **faith** begins and **what** our **religion's** about... well, it has a way of **changing** our **approach** to the Almighty. Before **his** discovery, Isaiah wished like the **devil** he could make himself invisible in that temple. If there'd been a stone there big enough he would have happily crawled beneath it. But, **after** receiving God's white-hot but welcome **gift** of forgiveness, Isaiah acted **completely** differently. He overheard God **talking** – not to **him**, but, more like, to **Godself**... kind of musing: *Whom shall I send...* and... *who will go for us?* For **us!** God said. It is **Trinity Sunday**, after all. (So, I can't help but picture God, the Creator, Son and Holy Spirit, up there on the throne together, engaged in conversation!) And way down **below** them... **formerly** wanting **nothing** so much as to be **invisible**, to get away from there... Isaiah starts **hopping**... up and down, waving his arms, doing his **best** to get God's **attention**. *Hey God! Here, God! Here am I!!! Send me! Send me! OK?!*

Honestly, as you **think** about it, that was really quite **presumptuous** of Isaiah... audacious... and, some would say, downright dangerous – breaking in on the Almighty's conversation with himself, herself, their-selves! Whatever. But, **see**... Isaiah couldn't **help** it. He was so **grateful** to be forgiven! And he felt such a **need** to **respond**... to offer himself. He **had** to. He simply couldn't **help** it. And, if it was **wrong** of him to do that...well, **maybe** the One who'd forgiven him the first time would forgive him for **that**, as well. *Here am I, Lord. Here. Send me*, Isaiah cried... with tears of joy and gratitude running down his cheeks.

Just so, we see others today... other men, women and young people offering... from deep gratitude and with a very real sense of **need** to respond... **offering** to do all kinds of things for God... to do whatever God might **ask**, whatever God **needs** to have done here below. *Here I am*, each **one** declares. *Send me. Send me.*

“Five years ago, I would **never** have thought that **I’d** be going with the church youth on their mission trip,” one grandmother said. “Today I can’t imagine missing the adventure. God works in wondrous ways!”

“You need someone to knock on **doors** in this neighborhood, to learn what the people around us wish we would do? Here I am. Send me!”

“You want me to serve on the Session now, Lord? If that’s what you want, I’ll give it my best.”

“You say there are older **adults** in the community who need someone to call on them, to check in with them every week and remind them that they matter? I’ll take that on, Lord. I’m **here** for you... **because** you have been so good to me!”

That’s **how** it goes for those who **get** what God has **done** for them in Christ... who realize how God looks at them. They go:

from hot **lips...** to **hearts on fire** for God!
From *Get-me-out-of-here!*... to *Here I am!*
from polite reserve... to an attitude of gratitude!
from *Serve me...* to *Send me...* wherever you want!

They go... **when** they are **sent** by God.

It was certainly quite a turn-about for **Isaiah**. And, is it a turn-about **you’ve** made, as **well...** or one you’re **approaching** just **today**? Or, is it one you’ll **make** sometime in the **future...** when **you** discover, **somewhere**, the tender forgiveness at the very heart of God... the amazing grace God is extending to **you...** and you **declare...** with all **your** heart *I’m here. I’m yours. Send me, Lord. You send me. I’ll go.*