

February 4, 2007
Epiphany 5

"When the Lord Breaks through Into Your Life"

ISAIAH 6:1-8

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!"

This past week while traveling to a conference, I was listening to the book *The Language of God* by Francis Collins, the famous scientist who directed the Human Genome Project. It took over 13 years to record and set down the complex information contained in DNA molecule of every cell in your body. Collins writes that the amount of information contained in the genetic coding of one so called "simple cell" would fill enough 8.5 by 11 sheets of paper to create a stack of paper as high as the Washington Monument. He tells how the language of design in the simple cell led him to acknowledge the existence of God and a definite pattern of design in the universe. As a medical doctor he experienced another break through in his life when he worked face-to-face with people who were dying. He saw in them confident trust in a heavenly Father and a sure hope of eternal life that he did not have in his life.

The prophet Isaiah had a major break through in his life when the Lord appeared to him in a vision or dream. He saw the Lord in all his glory, and heard the angels singing, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God almighty." He saw an angel reach for a hot coal and touch his lips with the words, "Your guilt is taken away and your sin is atoned for." Peter and the other disciples had a break through in their lives when they threw their nets into deep water and saw them explode with fish, a mighty miracle from the hand of Jesus.

Dear Christian, your life is the story of God breaking through and showing you things about him that you never saw before. You saw his glory in a mountain valley, a sunset, a waterfall, a flower, so beautiful- you knew it could not develop on its own. You saw a baby born in Bethlehem who is your Lord and God. You saw blood flowing from a cross that washes you clean of sin. You saw a Savior risen from the dead with nail marks in his hands who says, "Peace be to you!" What glory will the Lord show you this week that will take your breath away, bring tears to your eyes and increase your level of peace and joy? The best is always yet to come when we grasp how the Lord breaks through our lives as he did with Isaiah, or Francis Collins, or Peter, or anyone who ever becomes a Christian.

He shows you his glory

Notice how the Lord revealed himself to Isaiah. "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." Isaiah was privileged to see the Lord on his throne, high and exalted with the train of his robe filling the temple. The Lord God fills the world with his glory. He is in control of his church. The genes that control and govern the cells of your body in a most spectacular way cannot compare to the glory of God that fills his church as the Lord governs and micromanages the lives of all his people, including each of us here this morning. It is the Lord God who tells us in Psalm 46, "Be still and know that I am God, I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth. The Lord of hosts is with us. The God of Jacob is our refuge."

Above the Lord Isaiah saw seraphs, high ranking angels with six wings, two to cover their faces, two to cover their feet, and two for flying. Even the angels who are pure and holy cover their faces and cover their feet in the presence of the Lord almighty. And then Isaiah heard the sound of their singing, unlike any sound that has ever come forth from a human voice. "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory." Why do people tune in each week to watch "American Idol?" Do they not want to be the first to hear that one voice that is so beautiful it makes you stand up and say, "Wow!" Nothing in our human experience compares to the sound of these angels singing around God's throne. Francis Collins talks about a moment when he was sixteen, hearing a song so beautiful, that for a moment, a fleeting moment his atheistic mind wondered if there must be a God. Some day we will gather around the throne of the Lamb, with angels and archangels, and all the hosts of heaven, and we will join in singing, "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to have blessings and honor...And we will sing the great song, "Salvation belongs to God and to the Lamb."

When God breaks through in your life and convinces you of his glory, it creates in you a certain feeling of emptiness and smallness in comparison to the greatness of your God. So it was with Isaiah who said: "Woe to me! For I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty." The word for "ruined" is a strong word referring to eternal death itself. Isaiah knew he had nothing in himself that could ever measure up or qualify to be loved by such a great and awesome God.

Have you ever been around someone who made you feel uncomfortable because they were so much better than you were? I am not talking about better in music, or better in grades, or better in sports, but just so nice and so kind and so loving that it made you instantly aware of your own shortcomings. When Peter saw Jesus' power as God and the net miraculously filled with fish, he suddenly became aware of his own failings and weakness. "Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man." We come to worship, in the presence of God, and we confess our sin, "Holy and merciful Father, I confess that I am by nature sinful, and that I have disobeyed you in my thoughts, words, and actions."

Then Isaiah saw something that replaced his fear with peace, his shame and guilt with forgiveness and joy. One of the seraphs or angels took a live coal from the altar and touched his mouth and said, "See, this has touched your lips, your guilt is taken away and your sin is atoned for." The hot coal came from the altar of the Lord, the place where

Isaiah had seen burning coals and lambs and goats sacrificed, their blood sprinkled on the altar and part of the meat thrown into the burning coals. This blood of goats and lambs pictured the blood of Jesus, the Lamb of God, who would take away the sin of the world. My hope of cleansing sin from my lips, from my heart, my ears, my eyes, my hands, my feet cannot come from any sacrifices that I make. It can only come from the sacrifice the Lord makes for me. As the book of Hebrews tells us, "We have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Christ, once for all."

Today we stand here in this place and at this time in awe of how God has broken into our lives with his glory and came to us when we wanted nothing to do with his salvation. He broke into our lives and showed us the glory of Jesus offering his life as a sacrifice for our sin. Then he connected us to the sacrifice that Jesus made for us. This morning the Lord has a special way of connecting us to his body and blood. He offers us bread and wine with the words, "Take eat this is my body. Take drink this is my blood." Joyfully we sing, "Holy, holy, holy." The Lord comes into our lives and gives us his very body and blood for the forgiveness of our sin. In faith we feel the building shake and see smoke fill the room as we enter into this awesome display of God's glory.

He uses you to lead others to glory

The Lord wants his glory to come to all people. He wants to use you for this purpose. If I were God I would have chosen those magnificent angels or seraphs to go to people and show them God's glory. Instead the Lord picks people, often very ordinary and simple people like Isaiah, or Peter, or you and me to take the beauty of God's creation, the truth about Jesus sacrifice for sin, the glory of his resurrection to other people.

Isaiah tells us what happened to him. "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!' When God breaks through into your life and shows you the blessings he has for you, you immediately want to see other people come to know and believe what you believe. Isaiah does not hesitate when the Lord asks for a volunteer to go for him. It actually says, "Us" a reference to the true God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, similar to Genesis where it says, "Let us

make man in our image." Peter did not feel worthy of being in the presence of Jesus after they went out into deep water and caught the biggest catch of fish he had ever seen. But then Jesus called him with the words, "Don't be afraid; from now on you will catch men." The words of Jesus gave them the confidence to leave everything and follow Jesus.

Notice the footprints in the sand on the front cover of your bulletin. Who knows where your footprints will lead you this week, and what opportunities you may have this week to help someone see God's glory and cling to Jesus for their salvation. A poor suffering woman in North Carolina spoke the truth about her faith to the educated agnostic scientist Francis Collins. Her witness continually haunted him. It was one way the Lord broke through in his life.

Did you hear about the dog that kept wandering off from its home in Thomasville, Georgia? Its owners became so frustrated with his wanderings that they made arrangements for him to go to the Humane Society. But now the dog is a hero and 50 people are waiting in

line to adopt the German shepherd. In the area where the dog was prone to wandering, a woman's car went off the wet pavement in a remote wooded area tumbling down a steep embankment. She said, "I was bleeding from face and nose. All of a sudden, I felt a presence, a really huge presence. He was straddling me. I have watched too many horror movies about werewolves and vampires. I thought he was going to eat me." Instead the dog licked her face and used its 70 pounds of muscle to drag the 136 pound woman to the highway, and stood by her as she summoned help and then collapsed. It is an amazing story.

My dear Christian, this is the story of your life and mine. God wants all people to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. He is not going to send angels to witness to people and use God's Word to break through in their lives. He will use people like you and me to be heroes. Who knows what opportunities might come our way this week to hold out the word of life and show people God's glory so they can be rescued instead of lost forever. With Isaiah we joyfully and eagerly respond with the words, "Here am I send me. Send me." Amen.