

We live in a world that is broken. We live in a world that is full of sin and full of things that ought not to be—things which we would change if we had the power to change it. And we as Christians, when we understand God’s plan for the world and how his plan is to have no sin, for it to be perfect, for it not to be broken, and we attempt even to start that task of “How do we make things right again?” Well, that can seem really like a mission impossible. Where do we even start?

Isaiah felt the same way. Isaiah lived in similar times: a world full of sin, a world full of sinners, a world full of broken situations and injustice and the threat of violence and invasion. Isaiah’s times were also uncertain. Yet we see this ground shattering vision of the Lord in His palace. This vision has implications for Isaiah and also for us. **NO MISSION IS IMPOSSIBLE FOR THE REAL KING WHO CLEANSSES.**

Let’s get to our first point: I. When the going gets tough, God reminds us who's really king. The first verse of this text might be something we gloss over. We read, **“In the year that King Uzziah died…”** This detail is not just a time marker to tell us when this happened. For the people of Judah listening to this, the death of King Uzziah was the sign that the glory days are over. The last, best king was dead.

Maybe we can think of rulers in our age. Maybe they don’t die, but their term ends or they don’t get re-elected. You might say to yourself, “Everything was perfect back then, why can’t we go back to that time?!” Maybe we say a similar thing about a boss at work who retires or moves to a different division. We say the same thing about a teacher or professor. You had the professor for a few classes then she retires. The glory days are over.

Isaiah is then taken to see what’s really going on. Isaiah recounts, **“I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple.”** The word temple in Hebrew can also be translated as palace. The Lord is the real king. He is the one who is really in charge of what is going on here.

We as Christians can apply this same thing to our lives. We might feel as though the world is out of control. We might feel like there’s a bunch of people who are incompetent or even evil ruling over us or teaching us or acting as our employers. But we need to know that no matter how bad things get God is still king. Jesus is still king.

Isaiah has a chance to get his bearings, understand what’s going on, who’s he’s looking at, and naturally his response is “Oh, dear.” “Uh oh.” **“Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!”**

I remember one time I went to a wedding rehearsal for the wedding of the couple who would eventually become Silas’ godparents. I must have not got the memo, and I showed up in a t-shirt and shorts. Everyone else was in business

casual or better. In hindsight it wasn't that big of a deal, but I really felt bad at the time. I thought to myself, "Man I really messed this one up, I felt kind of like a dummy." I felt self-conscious not wearing the right clothing.

I mention this story because that must be how Isaiah felt times 100. Standing before the holy, righteous God who knows your past, present, future, who knows all your faults and foibles, your sins. He can read your thoughts. Isaiah must have felt naked before the Lord. Sinners before a righteous God are like a moth drawn to a flame or somebody looking at an open nuclear reactor. "Woe is me!"

Despite this, God sends us on a mission. And II. Without forgiveness, we are sent on an impossible mission. We can certainly relate to Isaiah. If we were to stand before God apart from Christ, it would be a terrifying thing. However, we aren't left to our own devices.

Isaiah isn't sent here for a meet and greet. He is summoned to be sent on a mission to be a prophet to the people of Judah. So we see that he is sent on a mission that would be impossible were it not for the forgiveness of sins. Likewise, we would be incapable of believing in God, incapable of fixing anything that's wrong with this world as far as the spiritual realm is concerned were it not for the forgiveness of sins and the cleansing that comes with faith. That mission that God sends us on would be impossible.

But this is not how it goes. This is not the rest of the story, as Paul Harvey would say. III. Cleansed by the King, He makes our mission possible. God sends the angel with the pair of tongs and a coal to touch Isaiah's lips. His guilt is taken away, his sin atoned for. Isaiah is refreshed and renewed to do the mission that the Lord has set out for him.

In this text in Isaiah, some scholars believe that the vision Isaiah had was not just of God the Father. God the Father is invisible. But perhaps we think, Isaiah saw the Second Person of the Trinity. The Son of God looked down upon Isaiah that day, and as Isaiah's lips were cleansed, the Son of God knew what mission He would have to go on Himself. The Son of God high and lifted up on His throne would step down from that throne to be high and lifted up on another throne. This throne we have in mind is not made of gold or stone, but of wood. This Son of God, Jesus Christ, would be high and lifted up on the cross to atone for the sins of the whole world. To pay the price of us sinners who have unclean lips and live in the midst of a people of unclean lips.

Through His death and resurrection, He has cleansed your lips. **"O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise."** **"Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer."** **"Set a guard, O LORD, over my mouth; keep watch over the door of my lips!"** All these prayers of the Psalmist are answered

as Jesus makes the atoning sacrifice to sanctify us and set us aside for His mission of proclaiming life to a dying world. Jesus makes our impossible mission possible.

I can't end this sermon without telling you the mission on which God sends Isaiah. We read verse 8: **“And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” Then I said, “Here I am! Send me.”**” But we can't end there. We can't end our sermon with Isaiah excitedly raising his hand like a first grader on the first day of school. We'd miss the big picture.

What's the mission God sends Isaiah on? What does Isaiah do? What is his mission? The result in verses 9 through 13 is not what we want to hear. Isaiah is to preach to people who don't want to hear, who don't want to see. He's to preach to people who don't care, whose hearts are dull, and he is to keep on preaching to confirm them in their unbelief until their cities lie waste and desolate and there's no one there. “Well, sign me up God, I want to do that!” Not exactly.

Doesn't that seem like a mission impossible? And so too today, maybe that's how we feel. We're on a mission from God, but that mission is not a good one, not an easy one. It's still a mission possible for us by the power of the Holy Spirit, cleansed by Christ, we are enabled to do this deed. It is a good and worthy service.

But God is also telling us that just because people reject our message doesn't mean that the mission is failed or that it's a mission impossible. We see that verse 9 of Isaiah 6 is one of the most quoted OT texts in the New Testament. And guess who it is often used to describe? Jesus' ministry, and if Jesus' ministry is marked by people who don't want to hear or listen, what more can we expect from our mission today?

The success of God's mission is not measured by the number of people who are changed. The success of God's mission is measured by our ability to clearly and fearlessly share this word of hope. It's not up to us whether or not people believe this. It's not up to us whether people reject this message or not.

Instead, in times of hardship and difficulty, we can focus on the first two things: Jesus is king ruling over us. And that He cleanses us and forgives us that we may do His mission and serve Him in this place and region. Truly God makes the impossible possible through His Son Jesus Christ. Amen.