

Pr Mark Turner: The Holiness of God (23/12/19)

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 6:1-5

What is the nature of God? There is a general consensus that Jesus is the best example of what God is like. But, before we look to Jesus, the fulfilment of the promises of the Old Testament, we need to remember the context into which He spoke.

Isaiah 6:1

Uzziah was a pretty good king. Under him, Israel had prospered. But, just because Uzziah was a good king, the weren't necessarily good. Whilever Uzziah was King, it seems that Israel had a false sense of security.

In Isaiah 5, the prophet pronounces a bunch of 'woes' to Israel - in response to their sin. Six times, he tells them that things are not well in Israel.

In 2 Chronicles 26, it says that God struck Uzziah down with Leprosy because of his pride. Isaiah 6 opens by recognising that this is, as it were, the beginning of a new era.

Isaiah 6:1-4

In vision, to begin this new era, Isaiah sees a vision of the glory of God. It says the seraphim were crying out "holy, holy, holy" is the LORD of hosts.

Holiness is the only attribute of God that is repeated three times in this way throughout scripture.

Holiness isn't one attribute among many. It is the single thing that separates Him from all others. God's love, for example, is a holy love. His justice, is a holy justice. Holiness is the essential nature of God. It is what He is.

Isaiah 6:5

Isaiah's response to this vision of God's holiness is that of brokenness and discombobulation.

In Isaiah 5, he has pronounced woes upon Israel, but when He sees the King, He realises that He is no better than the rest of them.

He, the messenger of God to the people, who has the cleanest lips of them all, says that he is "a man of unclean lips."

Have we made God out to be too nice?

In Luke chapter 5 it tells a story of Jesus telling them that they should fish on the other side of the boat. When Peter saw the miracle, he fell down and worshipped Him.

In Mark chapter 4, it tells of Jesus calming the storm. When that event admiring the storm. When that event had passed, they were terrified.

Nowhere in the gospel do the disciples refer to Jesus by name. They call Him master, or the like.

Isaiah 6:6,7

After this moment of despair, God responds by cleansing Isaiah. His iniquity and sin are taken away and he is made pure before God.

Isaiah 6:8-13

Then, when Isaiah has been cleansed, God calls Him to a difficult ministry. That ministry - calling people to the worship of a holy God.

This work was a holy work, and for it to be done in holiness, Isaiah had first to be cleansed.

Isaiah's message was one of impending judgment. It was not a pleasant message. But it was an important message.

John 12:37-41

When Jesus came and preached to the people, it was as though they were blind. This, John says, was the prophetic end, to which Isaiah had pointed.

The vision that Isaiah saw in chapter 6, was a vision of Jesus. Jesus was indeed kind, gentle and generous in the gospels. But this is not the only facet to Jesus.

2 Thessalonians 1:8

When Jesus comes back, He comes as a conquering King. It is a troubling paradox. We are inclined, when representations are compared, to choose a side, rather than seeing the whole. It is difficult to be able to ride the tension between them.

Revelation 19:11-16

This picture of Jesus reveals a complex picture, that is clearly multifaceted.

Our picture of God is the foundation from which every area of our lives is built. This determines how we live, love, work and worship. So, it is important that we hold an accurate picture of God in our hearts.