

## Answering The Call

On Sunday, we heard from Samantha Hasty-Zander, who's currently in seminary training to be a pastor. Samantha invited us to dig deep into a great vision God gave the prophet Isaiah.

1. Warm up question: Isaiah lived in a time when the land of Judah was wandering far from God. In particular, the prophets accused them of discrimination and oppression against people on the margins of their society. Violence and recrimination was everywhere. Given what our society is facing today, it's easy to relate. When you heard about the shootings last week in Baton Rouge, St. Paul, and Dallas, how did you feel?
2. In the midst of all the chaos in the land of Judah at the time, Isaiah experienced an incredible vision of God. Read Isaiah 6:1-7.
  - a. Let's try to understand what Isaiah saw and experienced as best we can. Using your own words, describe what Isaiah saw in the order in which he saw it. Imagine you're describing Isaiah's vision to someone who has never read this passage, how would you describe it?
  - b. In your own life, have you ever felt you had a "vision like" encounter with God? If so, what happened?
  - c. In Isaiah 6, God appears to Isaiah in the form of a great king sitting on a throne in the temple. If God were to appear to you in a form you could best understand, what form do you imagine God would take to best communicate with you?
  - d. From the description Isaiah gives, what did the seraphs look like? What function do they serve in this vision? What are we supposed to learn from them?
3. Re-read verses 4-5. These verses describe Isaiah's reaction to being in the intense presence of God.
  - a. If you found yourself suddenly in the direct presence of God, how do you imagine you would feel about God and about yourself?
  - b. When Isaiah found himself in God's presence, he cried out, "I am lost!" What do you think he meant? When in your life have you felt the same way?
  - c. According to verse 5, what did Isaiah feel was his greatest personal sin and the greatest sin in his culture? Why do you think this was the sin he felt most convicted about when in God's presence?
  - d. Read James 3:2-10. Why does the Bible single out the words of our mouth as one of the greatest sins?

- e. What should we learn from verses 6-7?
4. Now read Isaiah 6:8-13.
- a. Have you ever felt that God was calling you to do something? What was it? How did you respond?
  - b. Isaiah is called to warn the people of Judah that they are “seeing” and “hearing,” but not “comprehending” or “understanding.” What do you think that means? How could we, in our own lives, make the same mistake?
5. Re-read verses 11-13. Here Isaiah asks God how long it will take for the people of Judah to awaken to the error of their ways. In response, God basically says, “Until everything is destroyed, there’s nothing left, and their only hope is Me.”
- a. In your own life, when has God had to let you lose everything before you were finally ready to listen and make much needed changes?
  - b. Is there an area in your life right now where you’re experiencing a lot of “destruction?” Tell us what’s going on. Have you tried to listen carefully for God’s still small voice in that area of your life? Do you have a hunch what God is trying to say to you?
6. Samantha pointed out that the very last sentence in this passage is brief, but critically important. It is the “word of hope.” Here God compares the people of Judah to a tree that will be cut down, so that only a stump is left. God promises that even after the people of Judah lose everything due to their unwillingness to hear God’s voice, even after they become like that stump, a seedling will grow out of that stump – new life and restoration will occur. Samantha put it this way, “Out of what is left after we feel like we have been destroyed, God will rebuild.” Think about history. Think about people you have known across the spectrum of your own life. When have you seen this pattern at work – times when God helped a person or group of people rebuild after losing everything?