

A Difficult Calling

*A billionaire has died and all potential heirs are gathered. Some rejoice, others are angry because there are conditions put on their inheritance. The lawyer who reads the will is also a close, personal friend of the deceased is the one who must honor those conditions and not allow any money to be released unless the conditions are met. Go into treatment, five years sober, and only then will their share be released. “Mean, hateful, did you put him up to this?” A difficult calling.

Isaiah 6:6-13 ESV

- I. Isaiah’s difficult calling.
 - a. God is essentially saying, “My words in your mouth is going to harden people even worse than they already are.”
 - i. Isaiah 1:16-18 ESV “Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your deeds from before my eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow’s cause. “Come now, let us reason together, says the LORD: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool.” *Isaiah himself has experienced this cleansing – he is making God’s appeal to others.
 - ii. Problem – Judah has been in a time of prosperity under Uzziah’s reign and they’ve become haughty presuming that their religion is fine. Isaiah 2:11-12 ESV “The haughty looks of man shall be brought low, and the lofty pride of men shall be humbled, and the LORD alone will be exalted in that day. ‘For the LORD of hosts has a day against all that is proud and lofty, against all that is lifted up—and it shall be brought low...” *We tell ourselves what we want – this is working so it must be God’s approval – (Romans 2:4-5)
 - b. How long?
 - i. 6:11-12 ESV Then I said, ^h“How long, O Lord?” And he said: “Until ⁱcities lie waste without inhabitant, and houses without people, and the land is a desolate waste, and the LORD removes people far away, and the forsaken places are many in the midst of the land.”
 - ii. Isaiah begins prophesying in 740 BC, 18 years later under the last king of Israel, Hoshea, Israel is removed by Assyria after a three year siege. They never return from this captivity. This judgment leads to a revival in Judah under Hezekiah. God is serious, but even this turning to God doesn’t last.
 - iii. 6:13 ESV “And though a tenth remain in it, it will be burned^e again, like a terebinth or an oak, whose stump ^kremains when it is felled.” The holy seed^z is its stump.” *Judah goes back

into sin and has to experience its own captivity under Babylon – but a stump will remain. Isaiah is a remnant, and God will always have a faithful remnant.

- iv. Isaiah is killed by Hezekiah's son Manasseh, put in a hollow tree and sawn in two – referenced in Hebrews 11:37.

II. Foreshadows of a more difficult calling.

- a. Who will go for us? This is a conversation in the Trinity – angels are sent, they don't send. Similar to "let us make man in our image." But there is another conversation that is not answered by Isaiah but by the Son. Hebrews 10:5-7 ESV "Consequently, ^bwhen Christ^l came into the world, he said, "Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body have you prepared for me; in burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure. Then I said, 'Behold, I have come to do your will, O God, as it is written of me in the scroll of the book.'" *Isaiah's "here am I, send me," is an echo of Jesus saying to the Father, "Here am I, prepare a body for Me and I will go."
- b. Jesus grows out of the stump left in Judah. Isaiah 11:1 ESV "There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of ^lJesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit
- c. Jesus quotes Isaiah after the parable of the sower, He too dies because of the rejection to the Jewish people. "But unlike Isaiah, He is going to take on the sin of all humanity, including Isaiah's sin. Isaiah 53:6 ESV "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all." *No one can comprehend – "Father, why have you forsaken Me," as He bore the sin of the world. The separation is what weighed Him down in the garden. "If it is possible...not My will but Yours be done."

III. The difficulty of our calling today.

- a. I am a nobody, called to tell everybody, about Somebody. *the great commission, Acts 1:8 Here, there and everywhere.
- b. Accepting first that we aren't the main event.
 - i. We are somebody to God, but what people think about us won't affect their eternity. What they think about City Church won't affect their eternity. Acts 4:12 Jesus is the Hero and if we insist on being the Hero we will be stumbling blocks in God's way even if we're Christians.
 - ii. We must choose to be part of the persecuted remnant. We still believe in a holy God who created us and will hold us all accountable. We still believe in sin and judgment. We believe that Jesus loves us and that He came to save us. We are those who have done business with God and now our sins are as white as

snow. We are on the narrow path that leads to life. Though none go with me still I will follow.

- c. Tell everybody – this means we don't get to have prejudice against anyone. God loves everyone, even those who reject you. Even those who persecute you and abuse you. "Some people deserve hell" – I agree and you're one of them! *The problem with prosperity in this country – a young man and his girlfriend in my office recently. He had a choice to make.
- d. Dealing with discouragement.
 - i. My nephews and nieces – my love and all my efforts – some are fervent, angry atheists, some are complacent atheists, a handful are religious but probably not Christian, and a few are serving God. *Waiting on God and continuing to keep the bridge open.
 - ii. Isaiah 49:4 ESV "I said, 'I have labored in vain; I have spent my strength for nothing and vanity; yet surely my right is with the Lord, and my recompense with my God.'" Comment: "The servant confesses his sense of failure due to Israel's poor response, yet the servant doesn't turn from God in cynical unbelief; he accepts emotional suffering and frustrating toil with confidence that God will reward him." *the parable of the sower – don't become discouraged.
- e. Two things need to be guarded in our difficult calling – 2Timothy 1:12-14 NLT "That is why I am suffering here in prison. But I am not ashamed of it, for I know the one in whom I trust, and I am sure that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him^[a] until the day of his return." Hold on to the pattern of wholesome teaching you learned from me—a pattern shaped by the faith and love that you have in Christ Jesus. ¹⁴Through the power of the Holy Spirit who lives within us, carefully guard the precious truth that has been entrusted to you."
 - i. One is what He guards for us. Our reward is with the Lord. 2Timothy 4 Good fight, finished my race, and I've kept the faith – the crown of righteousness coming. 1Corinthians 15:58 Nothing done for the Lord is in vain even though it may seem like that.
 - ii. One we guard with the help of the Holy Spirit. What is in us is precious beyond anything we can fathom but it must be protected at all costs. *There is a thief – the fear of man and cares, worries, and pleasures of this life – the desire for other things.