## X. Gospel Worship In Biblical Perspective Worship God! "An Incomplete Perfect Service of Divine Worship" Isaiah 6:1-8 Dr. Harry Reeder April 28, 2013 – Morning Sermon

This study will conclude our ten part study on Worship God. Isaiah 6:1-9a says [1] In the year that King Uzziah died I (also) saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple. [2] Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. [3] And one called to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!"

- [4] And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke. [5] And I said: "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!"
- [6] Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a burning coal that he had taken with tongs from the altar. [7] And he touched my mouth and said: "Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for."
- [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." [9a] And He said, "Go..." The grass withers, the flower fades, God's Word abides forever and by His grace and mercy may His Word be preached for you.

Each year we try to focus on a ministry theme at the Briarwood church family to build it into the fabric of our lives. This year it is *Worship God* – the Worship of the Triune God. We have been in a ten part series that has two divisions. Division one was laying out the six journey markers of this Gospel pursuit of worship, Triune acceptable worship to God. It is worship of the Triune God that is acceptable to Him that God calls for. The only thing He seeks for is true worshippers, the Bible says. It is not just worshippers but true worshippers who will worship Him in Spirit and in truth. All of this is available on our website at <a href="https://www.briarwood.org">www.briarwood.org</a>.

The second division was to look at four worship services, two in heaven and two on earth. The first one took place in heaven in Revelation 4 and 5. The second one we looked at was on earth when King Jehoshaphat led his people in worship and then against the enemy. We saw how the praises of God ambushes Satan and assaults the kingdom of darkness – how worship is an instrument of spiritual warfare. A secondly earthly worship service was when heaven came down to earth at the Mount of Transfiguration and the majesty of the Lord was given before James, John and Peter as He is pointed to by Elijah and Moses. Then they come off of the mountain, John, James and Peter with the Lord into the valley and the King wins the victory in Jerusalem. We saw how worship had prepared them for that moment.

Now we are at the fourth worship service and we are back up into heaven in Isaiah 6. I plan to do two more sermons in this series in the fall, that are from the New Testament to conclude our yearly focus on it. This worship service is in heaven and that means it's a perfect worship service yet I've give this a title "An Incomplete Perfect

Service." Isaiah is an onlooker, an eavesdropper. He ends up as a participant but the initial worship service he is watching. He slipped in the back, got caught up in it and he's listening and watching. He eventually gets caught up. I would say that the service he is watching and listening to is perfect but incomplete. Now what would be missing in that worship service?

Secondly, think of this. If you had one word to describe who God is, what would it be? What would the Bible tell you that one word is? God is...write it down. I will answer that question for you toward the end. I want to walk you through this text because we are coming to a conclusion of this initial study of Gospel Worship. We have been on a journey of the Gospel pursuit of God-glorifying (exalting), Christ-centered, Bible-shaped, Holy Spirit empowered worship of the Triune God of glory. The Holy Spirit empowers us to worship in truth which is the way the Bible tells us to worship God which means Christ will be exalted and that means God glorifying. So when we reverse that the Holy Spirit empowers us to embrace God's Word that leads us to Christ centered worship that leads us to worship that is pleasing to God and that is glorifying.

That kind of worship has two features. It has adoration and action. Adoration is where God is being exalted in His majesty, the perfections of all of His glory. That means worship is action. Worship is not a noun describing the event I go to, to evaluate and that's the way most of us do it. We are raised where worship is on our menu list of life and there are certain kinds of worship services that I want, whereas Biblical worship is engaging in what God wants. That's what I should want. Many of us therefore when we go to worship services and leave we find ourselves what I call playing the religious Siskel and Ebert where we become the worship evaluators. We think "how did the choir do? Thumbs up or thumbs down? How about the preacher? Up, down, in-between?" There is evaluation but there is an audience of one in worship and it's God.

The question that is on my heart is not 'what did they do' but 'how did I do with them before the Lord.' Did I call out to one another in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs? Did I make a common confession of truth? Did I read the Word? Did I hear the Word preached? Did I give praise to Him with my voice? It is adoration in action. It is a verb. You stand, kneel, speak, lift your hands but it's adoration in action from the heart through everything that God has made you where God is being praised with our heart, soul, mind and strength.

That means there are two factors of worship. There is gathered worship which is what we're doing and what we're looking at in Isaiah 6. Then there is life worship which Isaiah is about to go do after this worship service which we are about to go do and that is to go into life to worship the Lord from eating, drinking, to the marriage bed being held in honor and glorifying to the Lord. My work is to be heartily unto the Lord. All of life is to be lived as worship. Gathered worship then leads into life worship before the Lord.

In our journey of this we have come now to this final study of this particular worship service that I acknowledge rightly as perfect but I would say is incomplete. I want us to take a closer look at this particular worship service by answering five questions – when, where, who, what and why? The first question is when did this worship service that Isaiah is participating in take place? We know the exact year that this occurred. It occurred in 740 B.C. It occurred at the death of King Uzziah and if you want to know more about King Uzziah then you can read about him in II Chronicles 26. Everyone knew Uzziah's death was coming because he decided his exaltation was more

important than God's exaltation and he denied the glory and holiness of God. Therefore God brought a judgment of leprosy upon him and the last ten years of his life was a slow death from leprosy in which there was a co-regency with his son Jotham, who was king and would now take over.

It was in that year that Isaiah says "I also saw the Lord" for he had seen King Uzziah in life and death. So in that same year Isaiah says "I also say The King." King Uzziah went the way of all kings, presidents, governors, leader and in fact of all of humanity. Unless God decides to reach down for an Enoch or an Elijah for a special reason then there is a one hundred percent turnover where we are born, we live and we die. It doesn't matter that Uzziah was king or where he was king, he died in 740 B.C. and in that same year Isaiah also saw The King on His throne. King Uzziah died and The King lives. Isaiah saw The King who was living in 740 B.C., before time and always.

"What is Your Name?" Moses said and God said "Tell them 'I Am." It is not 'I Was' or 'I Will Be' but I Was, I Am and I Will Be. I am the same yesterday, today and forever and before there were yesterdays, todays and forevers, 'I Am!' I Am before there is time, space, matter, a world and angels. I Am the Eternal, Immortal. King Uzziah is mortal but this King is eternal. King Uzziah had origination and termination. This King is the Originator and the Terminator of everything. The Lord gives life, the Lord takes away life. The Lord alone lives and is my Rock. Isaiah says "I saw The King" in that year, the One who made all the years and the rolling times.

The second question is where did he see Him? Isaiah saw Him in heaven which is called the Temple. So he saw the King of Kings, the Immortal, Eternal God of glory in the Temple of Heaven at His Throne. In other words, all of these temples on the earth are reflections of the Temple of Heaven, the dwelling place of God's glory that extends to all the heavens and is seen upon the earth. Hundreds of years later John is going to be given the same visit. John is going to the same place. John will see the seraphim, called the living creatures with the six wings, just as Isaiah did. He will come into that Throne Room at that particular time. So there is the Temple of Heaven which is the Throne Room of God where John will yet visit and where the King of Glory will come from to save His people as He lays aside His glory to go to the cross to bring us to glory. That is where Isaiah was brought.

Here is the third question. Who did Isaiah see? First he sees the Lord, the King upon the throne. The text says three things here. Isaiah sees Him seated, sitting. He sees Him on a throne and His train fills the temple which is the heavens. I'm having a hard time wrapping my mind around this. So first he sees Him seated. Have you noticed how the Lord sits in glory? He rises to send His Son. He rises to receive Stephen and His people but He sits in perfect, glorious, sovereign majesty. Enthroned He is sovereign over all. There is not another throne. This is The Throne, high and lifted up. Any other thrones exist by His appointment. Any other glory is derived from Him. Any other honor to people has been given by Him. This is the One who is glory, honor, sits on the throne and His train fills the heavens.

This is tough for us because in our culture the only people we know who have trains are brides. We say "Oh look at that beautiful wedding dress and the beautiful train that represents her virtue." If you go back about 4,000 years the train of a king not only declared the beauty of his kingdom but it declared the extent and the expanse of his kingdom. The train represented his authority and his majesty. Here is One whose train

fills the Temple. It is not that itty bitty temple in Jerusalem. It is the Temple of Heaven. His glory, majesty, honor, and authority fills the heavens and there he sees Him.

He not only sees the Lord but he sees the seraphim. This is the only time in the Bible they are named. I think they are mentioned again in Revelation 4 as living creatures but here they are named seraphim, which means the fiery, flaming ones. Who are the seraphim? Here is what we know from the text. We know that they are Divinely designed by God. They have a face. They can speak. They have a mouth, eyes and feet. They have six wings which are arranged in pairs.

They have been Divinely designed by the Lord to accomplish two things. One, they have been designed to occupy their place in the throne room of God before the presence of God and they were designed to praise God for all eternity. In other words, their vocation is to worship the Lord for eternity which means they are engaged in a vocation that God designed for them to function and it is an insatiable vocation. They never get the job done. It's for eternity. It's not like they can do this job for so many thousands of years and then they're done. No, they were made to worship an eternal God eternally and they never get the job done. It is insatiable. It is their everlasting occupation.

The second thing the seraphim do is they like other angels are messengers of God. They take Good News from the Lord and we're about to see that from the text. They have been designed to do that. They worship God in His presence. They are sinless, angelic seraphim and they are equipped with wings. Two wings keep them in suspension. They never land before God. They have eyes to see all that God has given them to see like the earth full of His glory but they cannot look upon the Lord so two of their wings cover their eyes when in the presence of the Lord for even the sinless seraphim would be destroyed. Then two of their wings cover their feet. They are not allowed to stand before the Lord.

I would like to give you a cultural illustration of this. Hopefully you were taught this. When you went to someone whom you respected and you sat down in front of them, you would never sit and put your feet up on the table in front of them. During job interviews that is not a good idea. That's a sign of disrespect. That is the cultural idiom that is here. The feet are covered. God said "Moses take off your shoes," "Joshua, remove your shoes for where you are standing is holy ground." Why? It is because God is there and when God is there, the Holy One, that makes everything attached to it holy.

So we have the focus of worship which is who is there – the Lord of glory who is thrice holy. We have the worshippers, the seraphim and sneaking in the back row, ten minutes late, no not really but caught up to look at it is Isaiah and he is watching what is taking place. He is listening to what is going on.

Now the fourth question is what is happening? This is what we call gathered worship. This is an assembly of worshippers with Christ at the center, the God of glory. The Triune God is being lifted up and this Lord of glory is being exalted. I want to give you five things about this gathered worship. Number one is in this gathered worship the focus of everything is God. It's not the seraphim. It's not angelic centered worship. God didn't do this for them. If anyone is uncomfortable here it's Isaiah. Isaiah comes and says "I am lost" so it's not seeker centered worship or angelic centered worship or believer centered worship but it is God centered consumed worship. God is there, lifted

up upon His throne. He is the sovereign, omnipotent, glorious, majestic God of glory. It is God centered worship and God is exalted in all of His glory and is lifted up.

Secondly, what we have studied for the last ten weeks on the acceptable elements of worship, are all there – praise, prayer, proclamation, the Word of God infiltrating everything, the centrality of God, confession of truth and sin and Good News of forgiveness and the Gospel. All of that is present in this worship service and all of that is declared. Not only are the elements of worship present but the attitudes of worship as well. Is worship supposed to be reverent? Yes. Is it supposed to be joyful? Yes, but sometimes we have joyful worship and are irreverent. Sometimes we have reverence but you would think we're sitting in the funeral home and there is no joy. Only the Holy Spirit can pull those two things together. If it's in the flesh and you're depending on the worship leader, you'll either go to a circus or a funeral home, but the Holy Spirit can pull those threads together.

Worship is a resting where everybody stops in their tracks but it's also invigorating, "Here am I! Send me!" We are calling out to one another, while praising His Name. It's resting, it's invigorating, it's reverent, it's rejoicing, it's the fear of the Lord. Even the threshold had enough sense to tremble in the presence of God. It is the love of the Lord that sends the Gospel to the lost prophet. It is the fear, love, majesty, and the presence of the Lord as the Lord filled the temple with smoke which means His glorious presence. There is the transcendence, eminence, reverence, rejoicing of God. There is the resting dynamic of worship. There is pardon and all of those things that make worship adoration and action are engaged in this worship service.

Thirdly, there is a singular refrain in this worship service. It is unmistakable, relentless, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God of glory." Behold is the Lord God Almighty and the earth is full of His glory. It is this singular refrain that God is being lifted up. This past week I was watching these videos of the recent bombing at the Boston Marathon and there was this one video where it shows this reporter as the video starts saying "Holy! Holy!" My heart went up and my heart went down. My heart went up because that reminded me that God made within every single one of us a desire to declare 'holy' but apart from God's grace we will declare the unholy, holy. We will stand in awe of the unholy unless God turns our eyes to that which is holy.

The seraphim have one call, one song, one confession, one reading of Scripture that is taking place which is "Holy, holy, holy" and it's not just holy in the normative or to the comparative but holy all the way to the superlative – "Holy, holy, holy to the Lord God Almighty!" Mr. angel, Mr. seraphim, I only have one word to give praise to God and what is that one word? He says "That's easy, it's holy but that's not enough so say it again and again, 'holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty.""

I know that most of us when I asked to describe God in one word would fill in the word with love – God is love. I am not trying to diminish that. I'm trying to enhance that. The love that God has for you is not a sentimental, worldly love but it is a holy love. That's what I want you to see. God's grace is not winking at sin because God somehow needs you. God's grace has fulfilled His holiness through His Son that He might save you from your sins. The one word is 'holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty.' That's my word of giving Him praise.

The word holy really breaks down to three things. Number one, holy means morally, sinless, pure and righteous. So is the Lord but wait, if that's all holy is why

would the seraphim be worshipping God, because they too are sinless and righteous? It is because there are two more elements to holiness. The second element is it means to set apart something, to consummate it from that which is normally used in life to that which is consecrated. That's why when Isaiah talks about Jesus, the Messiah, he calls Him the Holy One of Israel. What does he call the people of God? It is holy. What does Isaiah call the Day of the Lord? He calls it holy. Anything that belongs to this God who in and of Himself is holy, holy, holy then that which belongs to Him is holy. That's a holy Day, a holy people, holy worship, holy sacraments for everything that is belonging to Him now becomes holy because the One who owns it, the One who made, is holy. So if you belong to Him all that you are, all that you have is now holy.

I have asked you to hold on to that because you're living in a culture that keeps driving at you. You can have freedom of worship but forget the freedom of religion that everybody died for. You can worship God privately in your home and publically in that place on that day but don't take it into life, our culture says. America and everything else is secular. The founding fathers would have rolled over if they would have heard that because they understood for Christians that while there is a graciousness that allows people to pursue worship and answer to God, not to the government, they understood all of life is sacred. They understood the metrics of leadership in a country was not GNP and employment rates but life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness and that, that was to be lived before God. They understood and called for and the preachers of the day discipled them. The preachers of the day did not allow you to have a sacred and a secular. Everything for the believer comes under the sacred thing for the Lord. My marriage, my marriage bed, my eyes - what they look upon, my ears - what they listen to, my family, my church, my relationships, my work and everything is done for the glory of God who is holy. He owns me and He owns everything that He has given to me. Holy is the Lord God of earth.

Then they give the reason. Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, the earth is full of His glory. You and I haven't even seen an infinitesimal speck of it. There are thousands of species of fish underneath the sea that we haven't seen that they cry to God with the beauty that He has created them, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty." There are mountain tops that I haven't visited that human eyes have never seen but they shout to the heavens "Glory, glory, holy, holy, holy to the Lord God." The earth is full of His glory from the depths of the ocean to the heights of the mountains through the valleys, in the cities for it is everywhere that you go but sinful eye of man cannot see it. The seraphim tell us what to cry out. Glory, glory, glory to the thrice holy God. Holy is what God is. Glory is what happens when a holy God shows up, in creation, in redemption, in providence. I think John Owens said "Holiness is what God is concealed. Glory is God's holiness revealed." See His glory as Creator.

That's why we don't call the Spirit of God the love Spirit, although the fruit of the Spirit is love. We call Him the Holy Spirit. His Word is a holy word, a unique word. It's not the good book. Moby Dick is a good book. The Chronicles of Narnia is a good book. This is God's Word. Holy is the Word of God. Sacred is the Word of God. You are God's child. This is the Lord's Day. This is God's life He has given to you. You are claimed by Him. Glory has been shown to you, has fallen upon you and is to be reflected through you and me. Holy, holy, holy. The seraphim understood that God was to be

praised because there is none like Him. He is unique, one of a kind, none above Him, none beside Him, and none in front of Him.

A fourth element of this gathered worship is that God responds. They are calling out and singing to one another psalms, hymns and spiritual songs in this gathered worship. In the midst of this worship, singing, confessing and praise of this truth a theophany happens – God shows up. Isaiah 6:4 says [4] And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke. There is that smoke from Mount Sinai, the cloud that fell upon the Tent of Meeting, the cloud that went to the tabernacle, that cloud that went to Solomon's temple, the presence of the Shekinah glory of God where He now shows up. Even the thresholds have enough sense to tremble in His presence. God delights to inhabit the praises of His people. In the midst of praise God comes in glory.

The last thing is that Isaiah responds, the fifth element in this gathered worship. It is what we love to call a doxological evangelism. A called prophet is about to get saved and it's good to get saved before you start being a prophet. As soon as God shows up this is what happens. Isaiah 6:5 says [5] And I said: "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!" He gives a self-indictment of judgment, why? The reason is because he has seen the Lord. What happens when you see the Lord? These seraphim who are sinless were equipped and they couldn't even look at Him. God told Moses that if he saw His glory he would die. Elijah said "I'm done, I've seen the Lord of glory in the midst of His praise. He has come and shown His might and majesty to me. I'm undone and I'm about to die" but he didn't because God had in that worship service a Gospel preacher.

Then I love this part in the text in Isaiah 6:6, 7 which says [6] Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a burning coal that he had taken with tongs from the altar. [7] And he touched my mouth and said: "Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for." Then not a seraphim but the God who brought the Gospel blessing the gives a Gospel call. Whenever the Gospel blesses you the Gospel calls you. So here is God calling in Isaiah 6:8-9a which says [8] And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us (Us – the Trinity, accommodated in the text)?" Then I said, "Here I am! Send me." [9a] And He said, "Go..." Back in Genesis God said "I'll make man in Our image." So here is God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit – One God, I Speak, Three Persons – saying "Who will go for us?" The Bible will fill in the details on the Trinity but here it's accommodated for you. Here is the Triune presence of God. God's saving grace becomes sending grace. The great I Am, saved him and now the saved man says "Here am I! Send me."

Here is the takeaway. There is a continued refrain here that you must see. Worship is our vocation in life. It is the supreme privilege and purpose. This isn't an apology. I'm trying to give clarity. I want so much to teach you Biblical principles on work, marriage, family, parenting and all of that but the key to all of it is not technique therapy. The key to all of it is you grasping the fact that life is worship. I don't want control of my kids just so they don't show up on the front page of the newspaper. I want kids to be raised in the nurture and admonish of the Lord. This is worship. My marriage is worship. My job is worship. I thank you that you have given me techniques of Gospel

living but I want my life to be worship. When life is worship now we are on the track to faithful, fruitful, joyful living even in a broken world.

Secondly, gathered worship is foundational to life worship. Where Isaiah gathers, in gathered worship he is saved and equipped. The man who was arrested in his confession is now invigorated and sent to give life worship as a prophet. Now he is ready to serve the Lord. That's why the Bible says not to forsake the assembling of yourselves together. We assemble to worship God because in gathered worship God delights to show up. When He shows up in your heart and your life it's amazing what happens out of gathered worship. One of the things that happen is not only the reminder of free grace – "I love you sinner and I will save you from your sins" – but free grace is also transforming grace. It was no accident that the touch of the Gospel in the vision fell upon Isaiah's lips and now the same voice box that dishonored the Lord is now about ready to preach the Word of the Lord.

I can identify with Isaiah here. In one simple sentence, before Christ came into my life I was immoral, ungodly and blasphemous. My life was one of violence and rebellion. Probably one of the worst things in my life was the language that came out of my mouth relentlessly. God saved me and took away blasphemy. Now from that same mouth I get to preach and teach the Bible and proclaim Good News. He not only saves you freely but He changes you gloriously and your greatest vices sometimes become your most glorious pleasures where His honor is seen in you.

Gathered worship sets our theology straight and that's what gets life straight. Here is my favorite example of this. The Peanuts characters are one of the great resources for me in the Christian life. My greatest examples here are Linus and Lucy. Here is the last cartoon I read on Peanuts. Linus and Lucy are at a window looking out and it's pouring down rain outside. Lucy says "Oh Linus, I think it's going to flood. Can we get another ark? The flood is coming. We need an ark or we'll die." Linus said, "That has already occurred Lucy and then after it was over God gave a promise that it will never flood the earth again. Then He gave a rainbow that said He would fulfill His promise. That's what the Bible says, Lucy." Lucy responded, "Oh I feel so much better." Linus said, "Theology has a way of doing that."

We have a small God and that's why we live small lives. Worship allows us to see the majesty of God and it's that's God who goes with you personally. The God who is exalted up comes down to go with you and you say "Father!" That's the God who goes with you.

Thirdly and finally, gathered worship exalting the majesty of God equips believers for life worship in the presence of God. It equips life worshippers. The majesty then equips us for life worship in the presence of God.

This is what I think happens with gathered worship by God's grace as a means of grace lead us into life worship. I borrowed this from a preacher I was listening to and I applied it to my own life. God has given us a wonderful place to live where we can entertain, have Bible studies and hospitality. He has also given me a back porch that looks East, not West where I would see downtown Birmingham as my nightlight. In the East all I see are mountains and valleys. So I love to go sit on the back porch and see the stars at night. As I see the stars I see the glory of the Lord but it's not so magnificent and then my wife says "Let's turn out the lights. Now look at it!" Then God every once in a

while gives a fresh breeze of wind and the layers of clouds, even the thin ones are cast away. Now look.

I think that's what happens in worship. The Holy Spirit empowers you to cut off the competing lights of idolatry that would block your view of God. Then God sovereignly, gloriously, supernaturally, unexpectedly says "Blow Spirit blow" and the clouds of the world are cast away. Now I see the glory of the Lord flung in the heavens, flung throughout the earth and with the seraphim I can say "Look His train of glory fills the heavens and the earth is full of His glory! See it flung everywhere!" Then the worship service can get complete. See, the seraphim can't sing the new song. We have a song to add to the worship service they can't sing. The Bible says they long to look at it, they long to know it.

We can not only sing "Holy, holy, holy" but we can also sing "Amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me." I was lost and this majestic God came down and found me. I was blind to His glory but now I see. Move over seraphim this worship service will have saved sinners forever, cleansed by the blood. See our guilt is gone. We are clothed with His righteousness. The Lamb will bring us to glory! Let's pray.

## Prayer:

Father, thank You for the time we could be together in Your Word. Thank You that all creation declares Your glory and we might join it to sing "Praise God from whom all blessings flow" I pray in Jesus' Name. Friend, before I say 'amen' if you are reading this and you want to join the company of sinners saved by grace, forgiven and redeemed, sing that new song to the glory of God, live that new life to His glory and gather with His people to give Him praise, I'm not a seraphim who can fly to you but I'll run for I have a saving message to you; Jesus has paid for your sins and He will make you right with God. It is those who are right with God that can then 'go' for God. Here am I! Send me! And Jesus said "Go!" Father, I pray this in Your Son's Name, Amen.