

Intro: I remember the first time I went to a fancy restaurant.

As I arrived, a very well dressed man opened the door for me. He asked for my name and then began to show me to my reserved table. And as I looked around, it was breathtaking! Beautiful high ceilings with chandeliers, hanging from the ceiling. Amazing art work on the walls with little lights lighting them up. Curtains on the windows. This was NOT North Parramatta McDonalds! All around there were waiters and waitresses floating everywhere serving people with shiny silver trays, dessert carts rolling around with spectacular cakes. Beautiful music surrounded me as I noticed the man playing on this huge grand piano in the corner. People sipping champagne. The waiter took me to my seat, which looked SOOOO comfortable! And he pulled out my chair for me. I sat down, viewing the beautiful table arrangement with more forks than I had in my own cutlery drawer. He opened my napkin and placed it across my lap. It was too much to take in!

And then the waiter said to me: “Sir... can I offer you a jacket?”

I was a bit surprised and said: “No thanks, I think I’m warm enough!”

And he said: “Sorry sir, it is the policy of this restaurant that all gentlemen wear a jacket.”

I looked around the restaurant again and notice how well dressed EVERYONE was!

Except me. There I was in my ordinary shirt and pants, while everyone else was dressed like royalty! I was suddenly embarrassed. I didn’t belong there! I accepted his offer of a jacket – anything to cover up what I was wearing!

I was out of place. I did not belong here.

Isaiah finds himself in the throne room of God himself. It was the year that the King of Israel, King Uzziah had died. And now Isaiah finds himself in the presence of the REAL King. The presence of God. Here he is before the actual throne of God.

Verse 1. The train of his robe filled the temple. There were seraphim above him, powerful angels, like waiters, flying around him. And there is God sitting on his throne. So big. So overwhelming.

And the angels, the seraphim start singing, filling the room with beautiful music – “Holy, Holy, Holy is the LORD Almighty. The whole earth is full of his glory”

The whole earth is FULL of his glory. And Isaiah realizes: he is in the presence of God. And his glory FILLS the WORLD! There is no room for any other God. No room for any other King in the whole world. The earth is FULL of his glory.

The doorposts shook with the music, the temple filled with smoke...

And Isaiah realizes that he's not even wearing a jacket! He's underdressed. He doesn't belong there. He is in the presence of Almighty God, flooded with the sound of the angels singing his praise.

And how does he respond to living in the presence of God? It doesn't say if he was standing or sitting, but you know, I imagine that he had probably fallen at least to his knees by this time. (kneel) And he cries out, verse 5:

*"Woe to me!" I cried. "I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty." (5)*

Isaiah realizes who he is before God. A man of unclean lips. A sinner. A filthy, ruined man in the presence of a Holy, Holy, Holy God.

THIS is the response that we are to have before God. To know that we are living every day in the presence of God, a God whose glory fills the whole earth. There is NO ROOM for any other gods in our life. There is no room to worship anyone but God alone. (STAND)

And we look at our filthy, sinful life, and we see the gods of lust and greed, the high place we have given to money, and self importance. The priority we have placed on our children's education, on our career, and even on our family, and we realize that God MUST be number one above all these things.

### **But is he?**

Is he the Holy, Holy, Holy one in our lives?

Is there anything or anyone we have placed above him?

Is there any way that we have not honoured him as he deserves?

If only Israel had responded to God as Isaiah did, then they would not face destruction.

And what does God do for Isaiah? As Isaiah cries out in repentance for his sin... verse 6: *6Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. 7With it he touched my mouth and said, "See, this has touched your lips; **your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for.**"*

A coal, a fire, of purification. Your guilt is taken away. Your sin is atoned for. You are now RIGHT with God. You can now LIVE in his presence.

When we come before God, with this humility, with this repentance, with the simple recognition that we need to honour him as number 1 in our lives, God offers us purification – atonement. He takes away our guilt and our sin.

If only Israel had responded like this.

But they didn't. And so God has a message for them. In verse 8: "Whom shall I send?"

And what can Isaiah say but “Me! Send me!” Here is Isaiah in the presence of God and overwhelmed by his holiness and God is looking for someone to send to Israel with this message. How can Isaiah say no?

How can ANY of us say no to God if we’re living in his presence?

And so God says: Right, Isaiah, this is the message I need you to take to Israel. I want you to take them a message that they will hear but not understand. A message they will close their eyes and ears to. And I want you to keep saying this message again and again until they are destroyed, ravaged, ruined and forsaken.

God wants Isaiah to take a message to Israel that they **will not accept**. A message that will condemn them.

### **Illustration:**

Have you ever had a message that you didn’t want to hear? A message that you refused to accept or believe?

Some of you may have heard this story before – a personal story – one of my favourite school stories. Year 8. Report time. Agriculture. I did not think I had done too well. Agriculture was not my best subject. I get my results. I open them up. And what do I see in the result?

120 / 120.

I literally jumped for joy! Could it be that I scored, finally, somehow, a perfect score!

I went straight to my friend, who always scored better than me in every subject. And I said: “Check this out. 120/120. What did you get?”

He said to me: “That’s not good you know.”

I said: “What are you talking about? It’s a perfect score!”

And he says to me these words: “That, buddy, is your place in the year. 120<sup>th</sup> out of 120.”

I was devastated. And for 10 minutes I looked at that score hoping that somehow he might have been wrong. Hoping that somehow my A+ friend had made a mistake. Hoping that somehow I did not come LAST in the year. I did NOT want to hear that news!

And we don’t like hearing bad news like that do we? We don’t always like criticism. We don’t always like being told that we’re not doing well.

Because, sometimes, THE TRUTH HURTS.

God KNEW that Israel did NOT want to hear what he had to say. And he is saying to Isaiah – tell them the TRUTH. Don’t water it down. Don’t sugar coat it. Just tell them the truth. Tell them the words that will harden their hearts. The words that they will not listen to. The words they will ignore completely. **Tell them the truth.** And they will reject it, and ignore it, and turn away from me and THEY WILL BE DESTROYED.

BUT... because you’ve told them the truth, EVEN THOUGH they will be destroyed, at least they will have a chance of being saved. Since they know the truth, they will have a chance of coming back to me one day.

I looked at my mark in Agriculture, and after it sunk in, I worked harder at that subject. It was GOOD for me to hear the truth. Even though it meant destruction when I got home from school that day, it meant good things for me later on – when I beat my smart friend in the HSC!

The truth hurts.

Does the truth hurt you? Do you hear what God is saying to you in your life today? Do you hear him calling you to put him number 1? Do you hear him saying: “There is no room for any other gods in your life?” Do you hear him challenging you – with your love of money or love of career, your focus on holidays and mortgages and education and possessions. Do you hear the truth – that God wants to be number 1, no excuses? That his glory fills the whole earth and there is no room in our life for any other gods?

Do we hear the truth?

Well, in the end... there is good news for Israel. **God will save.**

Even though Israel will be nearly totally destroyed, there will still be something left. A small remnant of faithful people. Over 90% of Israel will be gone. But... in the ruins, there will be a small holy seed. And from that faithful few will come the line of Jesus, the holy seed. In the midst of our unfaithfulness, God raises up Jesus as our saviour, to take away our guilt and sin.

Sometimes the truth **does** hurt. But when we listen to the truth, it brings changes. Good changes. God changes. And those changes come through God's work in us. In his power, through his Son, and by His Spirit at work in us. All he asks of us is to listen to the truth, accept the truth, and let him work in our life to bring change.

Let's pray.