

Seeing God at Work – making a difference

There is an old Chinese proverb that says, “It is better to light a candle than to curse the darkness.” In a world where it is easy to criticise, complain, and analyse everything that is wrong, this proverb brings a sharp reminder that real change happens when someone chooses to act. Jesus said something very similar when He called His followers the salt of the earth and the light of the world. Salt preserves; light reveals. Neither is passive. Both bring transformation simply by being what they are meant to be. The challenge for every believer is not simply to comment on the darkness, but to be the light that pushes it back.

Isaiah’s encounter with God in Isaiah 6 gives us a rich picture of how God prepares someone to make a real difference. The timing is important. King Uzziah had died, leaving the nation unsettled. He had been a strong and mostly faithful leader for over fifty years, and his death caused deep uncertainty. Isaiah enters the temple in this atmosphere of instability. But in that moment of national crisis, God draws back the curtain and allows Isaiah to see what is more real than any political change: the Lord is still on the throne. Isaiah sees God high and lifted up, the train of His robe filling the temple, the seraphim declaring His holiness, and the very foundations trembling at His voice. It is a vision that corrects perspective and enlarges faith. Many of us lose heart because our view of God has become small. When our vision is limited—by spiritual laziness, by sin, by discouragement, or by a lack of real relationship with God—we inevitably lose confidence in what God can do. Isaiah’s vision reminds us that God is not distant. He is alive, holy, powerful, and entirely in control.

Yet seeing God clearly also brings an uncomfortable clarity about ourselves. Isaiah cries out, “Woe is me, for I am undone.” Standing in the light of God’s holiness exposes his own uncleanness. The reference to “unclean lips” is significant, especially in light of the leprosy that struck King Uzziah. Isaiah realises that although Uzziah suffered physical uncleanness, the people—including Isaiah—have spiritual uncleanness. Before God can use someone to bring change, He first deals with what is within them. But God’s response is not condemnation. A seraph touches Isaiah’s lips with a coal from the altar, symbolising cleansing and forgiveness. God removes what Isaiah could never remove himself. This pattern holds true today: when we confess our need, God graciously restores. We are not used by God because we are worthy; we are used because He is merciful.

Once Isaiah is cleansed, he hears the call of God: “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” God does not force Isaiah into service; He invites him. Isaiah responds with willingness, “Here am I. Send me.” The man who moments earlier felt undone is now ready to step into God’s purposes. A heart that has truly seen God, recognised its own need, and received God’s cleansing becomes a heart that is willing to be sent. And Isaiah is sent back into the same troubled world, but now with a renewed confidence that the real King is still reigning.

This same pattern appears again in the ministry of Jesus, especially in the feeding of the 5,000 in Matthew 14:13–21. Jesus withdraws after hearing of John the Baptist’s death, yet the crowds follow Him. Instead of turning them away, He is moved with compassion and heals their sick. As evening approaches, the disciples suggest sending the people away to find food. It is a practical, sensible solution, but Jesus sees differently. He sees not merely a problem, but an

opportunity for God's provision to be revealed. He tells the disciples, "You give them something to eat." Their response exposes their limitations: "We have only five loaves and two fish." Jesus asks them to bring what they have. He blesses it, breaks it, and gives it back to them to distribute. What seemed insufficient becomes more than enough when placed in the hands of Jesus. Everyone is fed, and twelve baskets of leftovers remain.

This miracle reveals the same truth Isaiah learned: when we see God clearly and respond in faith, our small offerings become powerful in His hands. The disciples saw a crowd too large; Jesus saw a need God was ready to meet. The disciples saw their own lack; Jesus saw the Father's abundance. The disciples wanted to send the problem away; Jesus wanted to involve them in the solution. Just as Isaiah moved from fear to availability, the disciples moved from doubt to participation. Jesus did the miracle, but He allowed them to be part of it.

Both Isaiah's commissioning and the feeding of the 5,000 teach us that God works through people who are willing to see Him, willing to see the need around them, and willing to offer what they have. We may only bring a small lunch, a simple word, a compassionate act, or a quiet prayer, but in God's hands these become candles pushing back the darkness. Real change happens when ordinary people place their lives in the hands of an extraordinary God.

Questions

When you think about Isaiah's vision of God in Isaiah 6, what aspects of God's character stand out most to you, and how might a clearer vision of God change the way you respond to challenges today?

In what ways do you relate to Isaiah's confession of being "unclean," and how does God's grace shape your willingness to be used by Him despite your imperfections?

The disciples wanted to send the crowd away in Matthew 14:13–21, while Jesus invited them to participate in the miracle. What situations in your life might God be calling you to step into rather than avoid?

Jesus asked the disciples to bring the little they had—five loaves and two fish. What "little" do you have that God might want to use, and what holds you back from offering it?

Both Isaiah and the disciples moved from limitation to availability. What practices or attitudes help you stay available to God, and what tends to distract you from saying, "Here am I, send me"?