

# Would you like to meet God in person?

Message for Sunday, January 21, 2018  
by Bruce Fraser

**Scripture:** Isaiah 6:1-8

**Children's Message:** from John 1:44-49, where Nathanael changes his mind about Jesus after meeting him in person.

*Before the service, I will arrange with one of the children to hide in the choir loft, where nobody but the choir can see.*

We've all seen airplanes up in the sky. Have you ever had a ride in an airplane? It's pretty exciting, isn't it? You all—hold it, where is *Name*? I'm sure she was here earlier.

*Listen to their suggestions.* Some of you are also sure she was here, but you're not sure where she is now. Maybe she felt sick and went home. Maybe she had to go to the bathroom. I'll tell you what I think. I think she's up with the choir? What do you think about that? *Since that doesn't make any sense, they will naturally doubt me. But because of my position, they may be hesitant to say that.*

Some of you believe me. Some of you don't believe me. And some of you aren't sure what to think. *I'll ask one of the children to go and look.*

Did you see *Name* there? *Yes.* So now there are two of us who say that *Name* is with the choir. Does that change your mind? *For some, yes. Some will still have doubts, though. Maybe the whole thing is a trick—just the kind of thing they know I'd do!*

Here's what is happening: you can be pretty sure that *Name* is up there. But only those who have seen with their own eyes can be absolutely certain. *Name*, will you come and join us, please? Thank-you; you all did a good job.

I think we learned something important today. It's one thing to hear someone else's story. It's quite different to do it yourself. Just like riding in an airplane. Hearing someone else describe is nothing like actually doing it yourself!

I talk with you about God, and so do your parents. That's good. But even better is when you yourself talk with God. It is better when you ask God to forgive you when you do something bad, when you know in your heart that God loves you, when you choose to obey God's commands in the Bible. You're no longer just hearing about Jesus. You're living as one of his followers.

Thanks to Harvey and Patsie Moore for this idea, in their book *The Droopy Flower Mystery*.

**Message** “Would you like to meet God in person?”

At the end of last week's message, I said, “To experience God's presence in our lives is the most powerful, awesome thing that can ever happen to us.” The Scripture we're reading today tells about someone to whom this happened.

That person was Isaiah. What kind of a person he was before this encounter, we know nothing. We don't know what his occupation was. We don't know whether he was from a poor or a rich family. These are the kinds of details that talk-shows and gossip magazines love to focus on, and the more sensational, the better.

What the Bible focuses on is what kind of person Isaiah was *after* meeting God. It completely changed his life. He had the boldness to confront kings and tell them they were wrong. He obeyed God no matter what the consequences. He was willing to be humbled, so long as God's message was made clear to the people (e.g. Isaiah 20:1-6, where he goes around naked, as a warning of the captivity and shame that awaits those who do not follow God's way). Above all, he never ceased exalting God in all his holiness.

This is the kind of change that can happen in someone's life—in my life and your life—when we experience God's presence. The difference for us today is that God desires to have this kind of intimate relationship with everyone, not just with special prophets. We can have a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ.

That is what we do in worship: we are meeting with God as a group, exalting our Lord, singing his praise, offering ourselves as living offerings, enjoying his presence.

Today's message is part of a series of messages on worship. Let's read about what happened to Isaiah that day, but with a special focus on what happens when we worship.

## 1) We are aware of the awesome, wonderful presence of God

Isaiah 6:1-4, New Living Translation:

In the year King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord. He was sitting on a lofty throne, and the train of his robe filled the Temple. Hovering around him were mighty

seraphim, each with six wings. With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with the remaining two they flew. In a great chorus they sang, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty! The whole earth is filled with his glory!” The glorious singing shook the Temple to its foundations, and the entire sanctuary was filled with smoke.”

There is a deep hunger in the human heart to know God. People are searching for answers, for meaning in life. What happens when people actually meet God?

Perhaps the most common reaction is awe, wonder and ecstasy. That’s the description that Isaiah gives. God is so holy that even the seraphim—perhaps like a cousin of angels—are unable to look upon his glory. Just the hem of God’s robe fills the Temple (and remember that the inside of the Temple was as big as a house!). The seraphim are continually singing God’s praise.

That’s why we sing songs of praise when we worship: it’s our natural response when we are in the presence of God.

## 2) We are aware of the wrong in our lives

Isaiah 6:5, New Living Translation:

Then I said, “My destruction is sealed, for I am a sinful man and a member of a sinful race. Yet I have seen the King, the Lord Almighty!”

Most people go along in life quite contented with themselves. We are quick to find fault with others, but we consider ourselves to be models of virtue. Ask people on the street, “Do you think you’ll go to heaven when you die?”, and the average person will answer, “Yes, I think I’m a pretty good person.”

There are two problems here: first is the belief that it is our good deeds that get us into heaven (that’s another sermon altogether). Second is the cheap idea we have of the holiness of God. We figure that “pretty good” is the equivalent of getting a B+ on a report card. Not perfect, but, well, pretty good.

After Isaiah blinked his eyes at the glorious appearance of God, this was immediately followed by another response: pure fear. Having witnessed the awesome holiness of God, he was hit with the

sudden realization that all his goodness amounted to absolutely nothing in comparison.

I don’t mean that it doesn’t matter whether you live a good life or not—it does. Just don’t get the idea that God is really impressed by what we’ve done.

A young Scottish pastor was telling an older pastor about a very pious man in his congregation. This man said that he could go for a whole week without knowingly committing any sin. The older pastor shook his head and said, “No one who has ever been in the presence of the Holy God would speak like that.”

King Frederick II, an eighteenth-century king of Prussia, was visiting a prison in Berlin. He talked with the inmates, and each prisoner claimed complete innocence of the crime for which he was convicted. Each claimed to be a victim of a frame-up or some other form of injustice.

All except one. That one sat quietly in a corner, while all the rest protested their innocence. Seeing him sitting there oblivious to the commotion, the king asked him what he was there for. “Armed robbery, Your Majesty.” The king asked, “Were you guilty?” “Yes, Sir,” he answered. “I entirely deserve my punishment.” The king then gave an order to the guard: “Release this guilty man. I don’t want him corrupting all these innocent people.”

When we worship, we humble ourselves before God. We confess the wrong things that we have done, and the right things that we left undone. We do this without making excuses, blaming others, or otherwise trying to weasel out of our responsibility for our actions. And we ask God to forgive us, to cleanse us from our sin, to give us new life, a new chance.

When Isaiah saw the holiness of God, he trembled with pure fear. But that opened the way for what came next: the pure joy of salvation.

## 3) We are forgiven and healed by God’s love

Isaiah 6:6-7, New Living Translation:

Then one of the seraphim flew over to the altar, and he picked up a burning coal with a pair of tongs. He touched my lips with it and said, “See, this coal has

touched your lips. Now your guilt is removed, and your sins are forgiven.”

Once Isaiah realized the seriousness of his situation, God was able to help and to heal. God sent the seraphim with the burning coal to symbolically burn away the sin and purify Isaiah’s life.

There can be no forgiveness where there is no admission of wrong. There can be healing where there is no hurt.

That’s why I say that fear of God is good, for it opens the door to joy. By the way, I’m not smart enough to make that up. It’s from the Bible:

**Proverbs 9:10, New Living Translation:**  
**Fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.**  
**Knowledge of the Holy One results in understanding.**

Only when you have recognized your sin and have been set free from it, can you do the will of God. The person who does not confess his or her sin has never really met God.

God saved Isaiah from his sins, and gave him a new life.

Do you believe God has forgiven you and loves you? Are you living like you believe it? And if God can forgive you, then you can forgive yourself and love yourself, too. This is so important, I don’t want you to miss it, so I’ll say it again: *If God can forgive you, then you can forgive yourself and love yourself, too.*

That is the beginning of inner healing.

When we experience this in worship, it can be overwhelming. In many churches where people haven’t been trained to park their emotions at the door, it’s quite common for people to break into sobbing during the worship. They are the tears of freedom: the guilt and shame that have built up over the years is suddenly released; the bitterness is let go and replaced by love. They are tears of joy and peace. They are tears of worship.

#### 4) We are commissioned as servants

**Isaiah 6:8, New Living Translation:**  
 Then I heard the Lord asking, “Whom should I send as a messenger to my people? Who will go for us?”

And I said, “Lord, I’ll go! Send me.”

When God accepted Isaiah, it was pure grace. Isaiah was so moved by this experience that he determined to be faithful throughout the rest of his life in serving this God.

Peter must have been stunned that Jesus would want a man like him: rough and unreliable. Yet, when he heard the invitation, he left everything and followed Jesus. It was a radical, no-strings-attached commitment.

Paul deserved to be condemned, but instead he was chosen by the very one he had hated. He worked harder than all the other apostles, because he was so full of gratitude.

What about you? What is God calling you to do this week, this year? What gifts has God already given you, to prepare you for your work?

Part of our worship is offering our tithes and gifts. But it’s much more than our money. We give ourselves as living offerings:

**Romans 12:1, Today’s English Version:**  
**Because of God’s great mercy to us I appeal to you:**  
**Offer yourselves as a living sacrifice to God, dedicated to his service and pleasing to him. This is the true worship that you should offer.**

What we do all week long is also worship, when it is done in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour. For to him belongs all the praise and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.