

Series: God's Life-Changing Truth – Part 1

Isaiah 6:1-7 ESV

Why Is God's Holiness a Problem for Us?

Wednesday, February 18 at 11:00 & 7:00

Ash Wednesday – 2015

Our Free Meals at 12 & 6 begin next Wednesday!

Introduction: Dear friends in Christ: Are you okay? If you said, “yes,” why are you okay? What makes you okay?

In 1969 Thomas Harris wrote the book, *I'm OK, You're OK*, which became one of the best-selling self-help books ever published. The book claims that “the phrase *I'm OK, You're OK* is one of four ‘life positions’ that each of us may take. The four positions are:¹

1. *I'm Not OK, You're OK*
2. *I'm Not OK, You're Not OK*
3. *I'm OK, You're Not OK*
4. *I'm OK, You're OK*

The first phrase is how you see yourself; the second phrase is how you see others. From a worldly perspective, *seeing yourself as okay is good!* Furthermore, if you think someone else is okay, *that is also good!* So if everyone in the world could honestly say, “I’m okay, you’re okay,” would everyone actually be okay?

Many would like to think so, *but God in His Word disagrees!* If God picked one of the four positions, He would pick number 3: “*I’m OK, You’re Not OK.*” God is okay because He

¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/I%27m_OK,_You%27re_OK

is holy, but everyone in the world – *apart from Jesus* – is not okay because of sin. Let’s move into Isaiah chapter 6:

1. **God’s Awesome Holiness:** ¹ *In the year that King Uzziah died [in 758 B.C.] I 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. //*
 - a. Isaiah did not see the Lord face to face, but the Lord revealed Himself to Isaiah through an amazing vision. The vision included ♦the Lord’s high throne, ♦the impressive train of his robe, and ♦the remarkable seraphim with their six wings.
 - b. The seraphim are amazing creatures, and yet even they cover their faces – rather than look upon the Lord. They also called out: “*Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts...*” St. Ambrose (340-397), *an early church father*, made this comment on their triple use of “*holy*”: “*They say it, not once, lest you should believe that there is but one; not twice, lest you should exclude the Spirit; they say not holies, lest you should imagine that there is plurality [thus more than one God], but they repeat three times and say the same word, that even in a hymn you may understand the distinction of*

Persons in the Trinity, and the oneness of the Godhead..." (NPNF 2 10:151).²

2. **Our Excessive Un-holiness:**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!" //
- The Lord said to Moses, "you cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live." (Exodus 33:20 ESV) Therefore, when Isaiah said, "Woe is me!" he was indicating that he was as good as dead! Those who heard Peter preach on the Day of Pentecost declared a similar reality; the Bible says that – when they learned that Jesus, whom they had crucified, was both Lord and Christ – "they were cut to the heart..." (Acts 2:37 ESV)
 - But why such a reaction? These words are from The Lutheran Study Bible: "God, the Holy One of Israel, is absolutely perfect, pure, and sinless. His absolute righteousness cannot tolerate the slightest error. He demands that we be perfect, as He is perfect (Mt 5:48; cf Lv 11:44). Yet, we are sinful, error-prone, and rebellious against our Maker."³ He is holy, *but we are not!* He is okay, but we – *apart from Jesus* – are certainly not okay!

² Engelbrecht, E. A. (2009). *The Lutheran Study Bible* (p. 1098). St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House.

³ *Ibid.*, 1099.

3. **God's Awesome Action to Take Away Our Sin:**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." //
- The Lord blessed Isaiah by showing him the shocking contrast: *I am holy, but you are not!* Think about the greatness of Moses, yet, when Moses approached the burning bush, the Lord said to him, "Do not come near; take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground." (Exodus 3:5 ESV)
 - Then *the Lord took action* to remove Isaiah's sin! The action was *not* earned or deserved; *it was the Lord's gracious gift, it pointed to Jesus' ultimate work of atonement!* Therefore, in **Isaiah 6:8**, when the Lord said, "who will go for us?" [Isaiah, filled with thanksgiving, was glad to say,] "Here am I! Send me." (ESV)
 - It is also important for us to see the contrast: *God is so holy; we are so unholy!* Then, *being sorry for our sins*, the Lord took radical action to make us holy in His sight through Jesus.

Conclusion: Today, God's Life-Changing Truth has focused on ♦God's holiness, ♦our un-holiness, and ♦Jesus' saving work. Now, *through Jesus*, let us know that we are holy in God's sight! And all God's people said: Amen!

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