

## **Isaiah 6:1-8; Luke 5:1-11 Come to the the Well**

Have you ever seen something that has ‘blown your mind’ – to coin a popular phrase; or something that you’d use the term “AWESOME” – in the true sense of the word – to describe?

Many of you will know Jay and I recently sold the place that we had near Jindabyne. When we bought it, our first glimpse of the view from that property was what sold us. It was mind blowing!

Photos don’t really do it justice. You really have to stand before the view to appreciate the majesty and awesomeness of the vista before you

We have two readings this morning, one in Isaiah and one in Luke, that talk about encounters people had with God - encounters that did so much more than simply ‘blow their minds’! It changed their lives forever!

Let’s have a look at them.

Isaiah lived in the mid 700s before the birth of Christ. He was an ordinary man, married, and had two sons. One day, he had an incredible experience of God, which we read about in chapter 6:

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord. He was sitting on his throne, high and exalted, and his robe filled the whole Temple. Around him flaming creatures were standing, each of which had six wings. Each creature covered its face with two wings, and its body with two, and used the other two for flying. They were calling out to each other: "Holy, holy, holy! The LORD Almighty is holy! His glory fills the world."

The sound of their voices made the foundation of the Temple shake, and the Temple itself became filled with smoke.

Sometimes it’s hard to put things into words! Isaiah did the best he could – but it really didn’t convey the majesty and awe and *terror* that this vision instilled in him!

How he responded gives us a bit more of an idea....

He said, "There is no hope for me! I am doomed because every word that passes my lips is sinful, and I live among a people whose every word is sinful. And yet, with my own eyes I have seen the King, the LORD Almighty."

All of a sudden, when confronted with the glory and majesty and utter PURITY of God – Isaiah could no longer stand himself. He suddenly saw himself for what he was in comparison with a Holy God. He saw his sin. He saw his people's sin. The contrast was so beyond his comprehension that he expected to die – to be engulfed and annihilated by the holiness and purity before him. He had seen the Lord, the Almighty with his own eyes!

But Isaiah didn't die. In fact, this was the beginning of the rest of his life! In his vision, an angel took a hot coal and touched it to his lips – symbolically purifying him from all his sin.

A dramatic change took place. Instead of crouching in terror before a holy God – seeing every last skerrick of his sin and rebellion - he found he could stand in God's presence. He found he could gaze upon him....and he heard God speak! "I need a messenger," said God, looking straight at Isaiah. "Who will we send?"

Isaiah responded "SEND ME! I'll go!" And so began Isaiah's prophetic ministry.

The story in Luke has similarities. Though instead of being a vision, this encounter with God was grounded in earthly reality.

It was the early days of Jesus ministry, but already he was drawing large crowds. On this particular morning, at the edge of lake Galilee, the crowd pressed closer to Jesus to hear better. As Jesus backed up and found his sandals wet, he got into a boat that had been pulled up onto the shore, and asked the fisherman who owned it – Simon – to push out into the lake a bit. It was early in the morning, and it would have been still, allowing the sound to carry over the water to the crowd.

When he had finished teaching, Jesus looked at Simon and his offsidiers – who no doubt were quite chuffed that that this popular Rabbi had used their boat – and told them to go out further, and let down their nets in the deep water and they'd catch something!

Though Simon thought it was a waste of time, -they'd been trying all night without success - he did it.

We know what happened. So many fish!

Then Simon, enlightened by the Spirit, suddenly caught a glimpse of who it was that was standing in his boat. He dropped to his knees – and in fear, called out – “Lord, go away from me, for I’m a sinful man!!” We know he was afraid, because Jesus comforted him by telling him not to be. – and then there came the call. “From now on, you’ll be fishers of men!”

In both these stories, there’s a similar pattern. First of all, a run of the mill, every day person has an encounter with God

Secondly, the result of finding themselves in the presence of a holy God is like having a blinding light shine into the darkest recesses of their soul: every last detail and flaw exposed by the light. In both these stories, the men are filled with terror as they realise how far they fall short of the glory before them.

Thirdly, Isaiah and Simon both became aware of their acceptance by God, and of the absolute grace and privilege that was theirs in being in the very presence of God himself. For both of them, this encounter filled them with a burning desire to serve – and each was called to not only a deeper knowledge of God, but a deeper life of service and ministry. Their lives were completely transformed!

How do those stories sit with us? Do we think – “Yes! That’s been my experience too!” Or do we think, “That’s all right for them – they’re special. I’ve ever experienced anything like that!”

In a book I read recently, I came across this little story:

There was a thief who stole a priceless vase from a wealthy home. He then took the vase to market and offered it for only 100 pieces of silver. A merchant happened by, recognised its great worth, and instantly bought it at the low price. He then remonstrated with the thief. “Why did you sell this priceless vase for only 100 pieces of silver??” The thief responded, “Is there a number higher than 100?”

I wonder if we’ve ever had the question, “Is this all there is?” We worship devoutly, we give generously to our church, we are law abiding, God fearing people. But do we ever wonder if this is all there is to our religion?

It was the same question asked by the rich young ruler when he came to Jesus at night, and asked, “What must I do to inherit eternal life?” Though he had obeyed the commandments, he had inkling there was something more. The young man had a stirring within him, something that spoke of a spiritual

life that was more than just keeping the law. Unfortunately when Jesus invited him to this deeper life (Come and follow me!), he couldn't divest himself of his attachment to his possessions, so he rejected the call.

The book I mentioned is called "I am Awake – discovering Prayer" by Stephen Rosetti. Let me read a little more from it:

"It's not enough for any organised religion to simply give its followers a set of rules or a moral code and tell them to follow it. While it might lead to salvation, though not necessarily (as the Pharisees found out), it is not enough for the human heart. The heart cries out for more! It longs for a taste of the Divine and will not rest in any religion until it gets what it seeks."

Rosetti goes on to say, "Let us then search for ourselves; let us see if there is a number higher than 100. ...May we respond to the invitation of Jesus, "Go and sell what you have....and after that, come and follow me."

Has the Holy Spirit ever quickened our hearts and left us wanting more?  
Where are we at the moment in our walk with God? Do we want more now?  
I always want more!

There's a saying you may have heard; "The definition of madness is to keep doing the same thing the same way and expecting a different result."

If we want a deeper encounter with God, it's unlikely to happen if we just keep plodding along with our devotional lives, and religious practice, continuing to do what we've always done. We need to embrace something different.

We're approaching Lent. This Lent could be an opportunity to intentionally seek more of God in a different way. How? Start by asking God to reveal more of himself to us! That is a prayer he will always answer!

Now, while we can't engineer an encounter with God – it is always given through his grace – we can position ourselves so we are available to receive it.

One time, while I was venting to God about how I was feeling - I think I was going through one of those 'dry' times – he placed a picture in my mind. I was out in the bush, standing at the foot of a gushing waterfall. I was hot, sweaty and thirsty. As I looked at the waterfall, I sensed God say to me, "do you want to be refreshed by this water?" Of course I did! He replied, "Then go and stand under it." The point being, I had to move.

We could prepare the ground for an encounter with God by reading something challenging, or exploring a different type of prayer. Perhaps by booking into a real live retreat! I can recommend some places. Perhaps we could meet with a group of like minded people, who want to go deeper with God. There are two such groups in the parish – that I know of. On Thursday mornings at 8.30 at St Paul's a small group meets for an hour to seek God and to pray. There's also a meditation group that Mandy leads. Talk to her if you're interested in exploring Christian meditation.

If we're feeling spiritually parched, remember the promise of Jesus "... whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst; but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life."

He wants us to draw closer. Always. There is nothing more transformational than an encounter with God!

song "The Well" - Casting Crowns