

*“In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple.”* The day is coming when every eye will see what Isaiah sees here in his vision. And when that day comes, many will cry as he cries: *“Woe is me! For I am lost!”* But not all. Not all will cry these words on that awe-full day. Not those who cry these words today.

Yet who does this? Who readily confesses, “God is holy, and I am not!” Who fears God as did these seraphim, covering themselves with their wings in His presence out of deep respect? Not the world. The Lord’s name, the Lord’s house, the Lord’s day, the Lord’s commandments – none of these are given any respect by those who are of the world.

Even the baptized are prone to follow the world in this. How many of these know, and if they know how many of them care, that today is a high feast in the Church Year, the Holy Trinity? Yet the high feast in the world’s calendar, the unofficial start of summer, is given the place of priority. And sadly, for many of the baptized as well, much more respect is shown to those who died in battle than to He who laid down His life on the cross for us all.

It is good and proper to have respect for all. For those who wear or wore the uniform. For those who are in positions of authority especially. For parents. For elders in the church. For in respecting these we respect and rightly fear God.

But what do we see and what do we hear? Not the posture of the angels in our text. Not the voice of Isaiah crying, *“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!”* His words reveal the terror that is in his heart. “I am as good as dead!” he is saying, *“for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!”*

When the Last Day of this earth comes, every eye will see the King, the Lord of hosts. And the terror that is here in Isaiah will be magnified many times over as people of all nations will suddenly be aware that their lips, along with every part of the body, is unclean in the presence of the holy God.

But look, one of the seraphim flies to Isaiah with a burning coal from the holy altar. He touches Isaiah’s mouth with it and says, *“Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin is atoned for.”* These words and this touching of his lips with the burning coal remove the terror from Isaiah’s heart. And now he is anxious to serve the holy God. *“Who will go for us?” “Here am I!”* says Isaiah, *“Send me!”*

I wonder if you know, if you truly know how incredibly vital it is that you are here today as you are every Lord’s day. Maybe you do. Maybe you are blessed in this way. Maybe you were taught at a very young age to always respect the Lord’s words on the Lord’s day. To cherish them. To hear them gladly and take them to heart. And once you were confirmed, to respect and cherish the Lord’s Supper. This is so vital, for it separates you from those who are of the world.

The world, in complete and utter terror, will cry, yes scream, *“Woe is me! For I am lost!”* when they see the King in the end. But not you. You will lift up your eyes and rejoice because your

salvation is drawing near. And it is because you were taught to say these words now. To know your place with God. That He is Holy, He is Almighty, He is your Creator. And when you enter His house, you say, "Lord, open my lips, for my lips are unclean. I have used them to say words that are sinful. Words that have disrespected You. Words that have hurt my neighbor. But Lord, touch my lips as You touched the lips of Isaiah. Forgive me as You forgave him. And then Lord, use my lips which You open to serve You, to pray, praise, and give thanks."

The burning coal, the words of absolution which were given to Isaiah, will not be given to anyone when the King comes in the end. People will cry, "*Woe is me! For I am lost!*" But no seraphim will fly to them. No words of forgiveness and comfort will be spoken.

But today, right here and now, these words are spoken. They are spoken to you. Yet they are offered to all. And here in the Lord's house on the Lord's day, from the holy altar the burning coal of Jesus' body and blood is placed onto your lips. Your guilt is taken away and your sin is atoned for.

Every day, because you are a Christian, your cry is, "*Woe is me! For I am lost!*" Yet every day you have the privilege of going to your baptism into Christ. There you are found, for there Jesus found you and made you His own. There is no woe in your baptism. Only mercy and forgiveness. And in your baptism, as the water was sprinkled upon you, your lips, and every part of you was made clean.

What is a burning coal? It is two things: wood and fire. Not just wood, but fire in and with the wood. And so Holy Baptism and Holy Communion, these Sacraments are the burning coal which take away your guilt and forgive your sin and make you clean. For the water of baptism is not just water, but water included in God's command and combined with God's Word. And the bread and wine of Communion are not just bread and wine, but Jesus' true body and blood in, with, and under the bread and wine.

And so, when you were baptized, God's angel, your pastor, touched you with the burning coal, and you were marked, yes branded, seared on your forehead and on your heart with the cross of Him who was crucified for you. And this Lord's day, God's angel touches you, your lips, with the burning coal from the holy altar and you, like Isaiah, will cry not, "*Woe is me!*" but "*Here am I, Lord,*" because your guilt is taken away and your sin is forgiven, and your lips are cleansed and opened to say, "*Send me! Send me!*" Amen.