

Sermon Note: Awe-Inspiring Presence

Trinity Sunday

Introduction

We are beginning the longest season of the Christian Year, the Sundays after Pentecost (sometimes called Ordinary Time). But perhaps this season is where our faith gets put to the test. From Advent through Pentecost Sunday, we are walking with Jesus, learning, growing, and inviting alongside him; observing and listening as he makes his earthly journey. Then on Pentecost, the church takes the stage and seeks to live out all that has been learned as we show the world what living in God's kingdom looks like. We don't do this work alone, which is why we begin this season with this series about seeking God.

Illustration Video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E8WaFvwtphY>

In this clip from 1993's *Jurassic Park*, scientists react to seeing genetically-created dinosaurs for the first time.

Video Discussion Questions

1. How do the scientists' expressions and body language upon seeing the dinosaurs reflect feelings of amazement and reverence?
2. What specific aspects of the scene (visual effects, music, dialogue) amplify the sense of wonder and fascination for both the characters and the audience?
3. Have you experienced a moment in your life where you felt overwhelmed by the magnificence of something unexpected or extraordinary? What was it, and how did it affect you?
4. In what ways does witnessing something beyond ordinary human experience, like the dinosaurs in "Jurassic Park," help us appreciate the mysteries and grandeur of creation?
5. How can encounters with the extraordinary, as depicted in the scene, shift our perspective on the world and our place within it?
6. Reflecting on the characters' reactions, how do their backgrounds and expertise shape their responses to the sight of the dinosaurs? How might our own knowledge and interests influence our reactions to the miraculous?
7. How do moments of astonishment and discovery inspire our sense of curiosity and our desire to explore the unknown in our own lives?
8. Can you recall a time when you were deeply moved by the beauty or complexity of nature or a scientific breakthrough? How did that experience change or deepen your understanding of the world?
9. How do the themes of awe and profound realization in "Jurassic Park" resonate with the vision of Isaiah in Isaiah 6:1-8? How do both the scene and the scripture passage illustrate a transformative encounter with the extraordinary?
10. What practices or experiences can we incorporate into our daily lives to cultivate a greater sense of marvel and appreciation for the wonders around us?

Isaiah 6:1-8 (CEB)

¹In the year of King Uzziah's death, I saw the Lord sitting on a high and exalted throne, the edges of his robe filling the temple. ²Winged creatures were stationed around him. Each had six wings: with two they veiled their faces, with two their feet, and with two they flew about. ³They shouted to each other, saying:

"Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of heavenly forces!

All the earth is filled with God's glory!"

⁴The doorframe shook at the sound of their shouting, and the house was filled with smoke.

⁵I said, "Mourn for me; I'm ruined! I'm a man with unclean lips, and I live among a people with unclean lips. Yet I've seen the king, the Lord of heavenly forces!"

⁶Then one of the winged creatures flew to me, holding a glowing coal that he had taken from the altar with tongs. ⁷He touched my mouth and said, "See, this has touched your lips. Your guilt has departed, and your sin is removed."

⁸Then I heard the Lord's voice saying, "Whom should I send, and who will go for us?"

I said, "I'm here; send me."

Scripture Discussion Questions

1. As Isaiah lays out this scene, who is present with Isaiah, and how is God portrayed in this vision?
2. Can you describe the scene using each of your senses? Let this be an immersive experience, perhaps in conversation with a trusted friend or ministry partner! What do you see, hear, feel, taste, smell, throughout this encounter with the Divine?
3. "Here am I" is a phrase that shows up time and time again in the scriptures. Can you recall times that this phrase has come up for other figures in the Bible? Is there a particular figure who stands out? Why do you think this figure comes to mind for you today?
4. What do you think there was something about God's presence that drove Isaiah to his knees? Do you think that this may be Divine Love? Something else (e.g., awe, fear, regret, shame, or confusion)? If you think it could be Divine Love, what does this "drive-you-to-your-knees-love" look like in your life?
5. Notice how an encounter with God's presence changes Isaiah and seems to open him to new possibilities in his life. Most of us are not ready to listen to the callings of God without some preparation of the heart. What are the experiences you are called to put into your life (e.g., poetry, quiet, hiking, scripture) to be ready to respond with the kind of openness of Isaiah?

Add'l (Optional) Discussion Questions

Background info: Isaiah, chapter 6, starts with a reference to the death of King Uzziah, also known as Azariah, the tenth king of the ancient Kingdom of Judah. The author, the prophet Isaiah, may have included the king's death to explain why Judah needed a new direction. Uzziah became king at age sixteen and ruled successfully until he tried to take over for the priests of the kingdom. This huge misstep resulted in an earthquake and in Uzziah being banned to solitude because he got leprosy, an infectious skin and nerve disease.

1. How many sixteen-year-olds do you know who might be prepared to rule a kingdom of several hundred thousand people? What kinds of preparation or skills would be important for that young person to succeed?
2. Can you think of a time that a family or community system has been forced to make leadership changes because of a death or due to poor judgment?
3. Would an out-of-the-ordinary encounter like Isaiah's, in the first few verses of Chapter 6, make you intrigued or afraid? Discuss this with a study partner or family member.
4. Can you remember a time you've been asked to follow in someone else's footsteps? How did you perform in those circumstances? Was the transition your choice, or did you feel forced into it?
5. When in the past year have you experienced something extraordinary?
6. How can your relationship with God help you feel confident enough to say, "Here I am! Send me!" even when a task may seem too big?

Weekly Action

This week, pay attention to the world around you, and take time to look for moments of awe and wonder in your everyday lives that point to the grandeur and presence of God. You might do this by spending time in nature, listening to inspiring music, or reflecting on moments in your life where you felt God's presence. Share these experiences with a study partner or family member or someone else and feel how doing so adds to the inspiration!

Prayer

God, who touches our lips and pours over our senses a fresh sense of your Divine presence, open in us a readiness to respond to your presence with our own. Help us to put down our cell phones, our disruptions of life, and the constant list of to-dos long enough to notice your greatness around us. May that presence move us and invite us to say, "Here I am, send me." Amen.