**Trinity Sunday - Mission**

**Stowe Church 30th May 9.45 am**

**Plan:**

* I hope to do two things – preach the passages you have given me faithfully, with a mission focus but also to share something of what God is doing in and through the church plant that I lead in Oxford.
* To start, I have a question for you… what is it that motivates you to do something?
* If you are planning on doing something, what is it that motivates you?
* Perhaps, if you are learning a new skill, or trying to break an old habit, or perhaps trying to do something better, eat better keep up with a diet.
* Let me give you a trivial example… currently I’m trying to get fit…
* I used to be quite fit… but lockdown, and being a parent, I seem to have lost some of that fitness.
* So this last year I have been on Strava, it’s a great fitness app that helps track my running and my cycling.
* What do I love about it? Well, there is nowhere to hide… it tells me *exactly what I am like*… it gives me a right view of how fit… or sadly how unfit I am. It tells me exactly how hard I have worked, how far I have ran, how long it took.
* It gives me a right view of how fit I am, and when I compare that with previous results, it motivates me to keep working.
* Now with today being a mission Sunday, we are going to be thinking about God’s mission… and particularly, thinking about what is going to motivate us to mission. What motivates the church to mission, to be sharing Jesus?
* In our first reading we heard an account from chapter 6 of the book of Isaiah. And we want to ask the question what motivates Isaiah for mission. Because, if we had gone on in the reading in chapter 6, we would have heard how because of this encounter with God, Isaiah goes on to speak God’s message to God’s people Israel and not just a short-term mission but doing this for the rest of his life.
* So the question we want to ask: is what is going to motivate Isaiah to share God’s message?
* Pause
* I want to suggest to you that… what motivates him is **a right view of God and a right view of himself, which leads to mission.**
* Just like with my exercise plan, I needed a right view of my own fitness… Isiah needed a right view of God and a right view of himself.
* Let’s start with the right view of God:

**In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord, high and exalted, seated on a throne; and the train of his robe filled the temple. 2 Above him were seraphim, each with six wings: with two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. 3 And they were calling to one another:**

**‘Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty;**

 **the whole earth is full of his glory.’**

* Isaiah’s vision of God is of him high and lifted up, the Holy, Holy, Holy refrain is used to describe superlative holiness of God. That God, so brilliant and glorious that the Seraphim’s have to cover their faces in His presence.
* A picture of God a glorious, wonderful, all powerful and mighty.
* Do you see what happens when Isaiah encounters a God who is that Holy? First, he sees God… and it causes him to look at himself. And when he see what he looks like in comparison to the God who is Holy, Holy, Holy, Isaiah says v5 **‘Woe to me!’ I cried. ‘I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty.’**
* Isaiah is feeling totally insecure… That feeling that he does not belong here. Here am I a sinful man, representing a sinful people, how can I possibly stand before a holy God?
* Any you know what, it’s the right response to realizing how mighty and wonderful God is.
* And indeed should be how we respond when we have encountered the Living God, Jesus today. A right view of God causes us to look at and examine ourselves.
* And like Isaiah as we examine ourselves, we find the answer to be that I am a sinful person.
* Pause.
* Wonderfully however, the answer to that sin, is also in the passage and we see how it’s an act of God that takes away Isaiah’s guilt and sin. Isaiah knows he’s not worthy; knows he needs God’s forgiveness and amazingly it is through an act of God that this is possible, that he is forgiven.
* **6 Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. 7 With it he touched my mouth and said, ‘See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for.’**
* A right view of God as holy, gives a right view of self as sinful, and leads to the need for forgiveness through God.
* Isaiah had his sin atoned for by this live coal… but we are made clean through Jesus. His death, His resurrection.
* But there is more than just forgiveness in this account… this forgiveness leads to Isaiah going… the Lord says: **‘Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?’ And Isaiah say, ‘Here am I. Send me!’**
* If you read the rest of chapter 6, Isaiah then goes to speak to the people the message the God has given him.
* **Getting a right view of God leads to mission.**
* This Sunday as well as being a mission Sunday, is also Trinity Sunday a day when we celebrate this wonderful truth, that God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. And we hear in John’s Gospel later in chapter 12 that the person of the Trinity that Isaiah sees here in his vision is actually Jesus. That Isaiah saw Jesus’ Glory and spoke about Him.
* **When we see Jesus, we are stuck by how glorious he is… how sinful we are, and how we need his forgiveness, and receiving that forgiveness leads us to mission, leads us to GO.**
* Let us carry this idea into our second reading this morning. It’s one of the most famous encounters in all of Scripture. When the teacher of the Law Nicodemus, comes to see this new rabi / teacher Jesus by night.
* He meets Jesus but unlike Isaiah, he doesn’t truly recognize who Jesus is… Jesus tells him he must be born again, and Nicodemus is stuck thinking about the physics of physically being born again.
* Jesus explains he is talking about a spiritual new birth and speaks about his need for forgiveness… and how Jesus was the one who can achieve that forgiveness…
* But sadly John 3 leaves us wondering, did Nicodemus have a true understanding of who Jesus was? Well, we must skip through to just after Jesus has been killed on the cross… to John chapter 19 to hear that it was this man Nicodemus who goes to collect Jesus’ body, and brings with him and huge quantity of expensive herbs and spices to bury him with… the sort of thing to honor a king.
* Although not straight way John’s gospel shows us that Nicodemus has a right view of who Jesus is, a right view of himself and we see how this leads to forgiveness and then mission.
* So, what about us? How does a right view of Jesus, leads to a right view of ourselves, our need for forgiveness and a call to mission?
* I wanted to share with you a little of how seeing Jesus clearly in this pandemic has motivated the church plant that I am involved with in Oxford to share Jesus.
* In Matthew 25 Jesus says that ‘whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.
* Although as a church, pre lockdown, we were really growing and seeing people come and join us in finding out who Jesus is, since lockdown we have been in much more of a phase of loving our community in challenging times:
	+ Moved quickly online
	+ But also moved from a season of evangelism, into a season of serving others and out community.
	+ Lockdown one, support for our local school
	+ Support of GP’s
	+ Support for the council initiatives
	+ The needs of the community we set up a community larder, to combat food insecurity and poverty, and food waste. We started with 12 emergency food parcels now reaching over 300 people every week, with affordable food and also wrap around services. Encouraging healthy eating, Christian debt counseling, help with council advice, hoping to set up a community café.
	+ As we come out of lockdown we are moving from the community center, to meet in the local primary school at the heart of the community.
	+ Please would you continue to pray for us, as we move from a season of really serving our community through this pandemic, to drawing people together to see Jesus. That they might have a right view of how wonderful and glorious he is!
* Can I say thank you for your prayers and ongoing support in this season, so very much appreciated!