

## THE HOLY STUMP

Isaiah 6:1-13

Key verse 6:13

"And though a tenth remains in the land, it will again be laid waste. But as the terebinth and oak leave stumps when they are cut down, so the holy seed will be the stump in the land."

Last week we learned about the disciple making ministry in Ephesus through Apostle Paul. Paul set apart the disciples and focused on intensive Bible study and life fellowship. Through this, a mighty work of God happened and the gospel spread to the whole area of Asia Minor. Today, based on Isaiah chapter 6, we learn about God's vision and hope. God finds hope even in seemingly useless stumps. These would - as with an oak and lime tree - sprout again to new life and be used as God's holy seed. At this time, let us take up our spiritual identity as holy stumps and cooperate with God with the faith and vision of Isaiah for the spiritual revival of the young people in this generation.

### 1. Whom shall I send? (1-10)

The prophet Isaiah worked in the time of King Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, whose reigns together cover the period from 810 - 698 BC. In that time also the bloom of the Assyrian world empire falls, which provided in the year 722 B.C. for the downfall of Northern Israel. Chapters 1 to 5 paint a bleak picture of the spiritual situation in Israel at that time. The Jewish people had fallen away from God. God's heart was broken because of His people. In chapter 1:3, God said to His people, "The ox knows its master, the donkey its owner's manger, but Israel does not know, my people do not understand." God had chastised His disobedient people again and again out of love to restore them spiritually. But finally, God had to let judgment come upon them because they did not repent.

How God's heart ached when in verse 10 he called the rulers of the people "Rulers of Sodom" and the people "People of Gomorrah". Economically, the country had experienced a time of prosperity under King Uzziah. But then the king became arrogant and one day wanted to offer the sacrifice in the temple himself. Therefore, God punished him with expulsion for the rest of his life.

Let's look at verse 1: "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." Perhaps Isaiah wondered what would happen now in his country. There were many selfish and irresponsible men throughout the land, as well as proud and seductive women. Even the leaders were out for their personal gain. The people were like lost sheep without a shepherd. When King Uzziah died, Isaiah must have been worried about his beloved people because of the uncertain future. Isaiah was looking for God's orientation and God's nearness. With a broken shepherd's heart, he went to the temple. Verse 1 says that Isaiah saw the Lord sitting on a high and lofty throne. In a magnificent vision, he beheld the glory of God. Through this, Isaiah recognized: God is the holy God. He sits on the throne and reigns. He is the all-mighty and sovereign ruler. The holiness of God is one of the most important attributes of God. Because of His holiness, sinful human beings had to leave paradise and live separated from God. The holy God, however, longs to sanctify us sinners in order to have fellowship with us. In the Old Testament, God commanded His people, saying

repeatedly, "Therefore you shall be holy, for I am holy." God's people, unlike the peoples of the world, were to live holy to the Lord. Through the tabernacle, and later the temple, and the sacrificial service associated with it, God prepared the environment that the sinful people could be restored as God's holy people. Finally, God himself prepared the new, living way by sending Jesus into the world as the promised Messiah who, through his substitutionary death on the cross, reconciled sinful people to the holy God. In John 17:19, Jesus said, "For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified." In Luke's Gospel, Zechariah exults in his praise of the Messiah, exclaiming (Luke 1:74, 75), "to rescue us from the hand of our enemies, and to enable us to serve him without fear in holiness and righteousness before him all our days."

In the temple, Isaiah's eyes were opened to the holiness of God. God is the holy and glorious, eternal King. He sits on the throne and reigns from eternity to eternity. God was surrounded by seraphim who worshiped and served the holy God. Let's look at verses 2 and 3: "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. And they were calling to one another: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory." What a sublime sight of the holy God and what a heart-moving praise of the seraphim "Holy, holy, holy, God eternal Father...". Isaiah seemed to have arrived in a completely different world. Before he went to the temple, he could only shake his head in despair at his people. But in the temple, God opened Isaiah's spiritual eyes so that he personally encountered the holy and almighty God. Isn't that what we also need again and again? Out of this fallen world - and into the house of God, where we meet the holy, living and almighty God? Today on Sunday. And also every day of the week. We come into the house of God and seek God's face: in His Word; in prayer; in spiritual fellowship! God invites - then and also today - people to himself. Once God said through the prophet Amos (Amos 5:4), "This is what the LORD

says to Israel: "Seek me and live." And through Jeremiah He proclaimed to His people (Jeremiah 29:13,14a), "You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you," declares the LORD."

Isaiah was greatly moved by this poignant encounter in the temple of God. Until then, he had thought that the apostasy and godlessness of his people had become too great. But what did the seraphim sing? "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory." God opened Isaiah's spiritual eyes and ears in the temple. He learned to look at the world from God's point of view: All the lands are full of the glory of God! Even the holy Seraphim covered their faces before the holy God.

This holiness of God has been lost in the fallen and sinned people. In our time, most people live as if there is no God. They know nothing of God's holiness, so they even abuse God's holy name. That is why they live as if they are not accountable to anyone. The EU has removed the name of God from its constitution. Many leading politicians even omit the phrase "so help me God" when they are sworn in as ministers. This is not a good sign and reveals the dwindling fear of God in our country.

When Isaiah entered the temple of God in the darkness and met God, he saw that God is the true and eternal King on the throne. This God is holy. This God reigns. This God is to be feared. This God is the Lord of history. This God is the one whose glory fills all the earth. From Isaiah we learn that he went to the temple of God in the midst of trouble and darkness. He sought God's nearness and God's face. Let us also come into the house of God. Let us seek God's nearness and God's direction in the Word of God and in prayer. Let us see that God sits on the throne, that He reigns and that all the lands are full of the glory of God.

Through the annual symposiums of the co-workers and the Next Generation, we were able to remember the mighty work of God in

the past year. God worked graciously and mightily among us. We see God's work in the baptized, in the high school graduates, indeed in the Next Generation and in the sheep. At Conferences, Bible Seminars, and Master Classes, we experienced God's mighty work through the messages and talks of Next Generation. At the Christmas service, we saw the heartfelt cooperation of our sheep and their worship for the true King Jesus. God also used Olaf as a preacher of the Word of God precious in the past year. Through the International Bible Seminary we see that God is also working mightily among the Next Generation in New Jersey, Moscow and Istanbul. All lands are full of His glory!

How did Isaiah react to the appearance of God in the temple? Verse 5 says, "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." When Isaiah met the holy God in the temple, he recognized himself as a filthy sinner with unclean lips. He cried out, "Woe to me, I am ruined!" No one can stand before the holy God. God's holiness reveals our unholiness and sin. Isaiah repented on the spot of his impure lips with which he had spoken unbelieving, hurtful, perhaps even cursing words toward the withered people. Look at verses 6 and 7: "Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. With it he touched my mouth and said, "See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for." The touch of a red-hot coal must have been very painful. Through Isaiah's painful repentance and by touching him with the burning coal, God restored Isaiah as His messenger. God cleansed Isaiah's lips to no longer speak unbelieving words, but to speak believing words so that he could bring God's message to His people.

We remember how God worked mightily in our five baptized next generations. Through the intensive Bible study and spiritual servanthood of the servants of God, also through the writing of their personal testimonies, they experienced the effectiveness of the Word of

God in their lives. They came to Jesus with their prayers, repented and experienced how God cleansed their unclean lips. Through baptism they testified to their new life in Christ. Now they cooperate warmly with their parents and within the work of God. With joy they participate in the sufferings of Jesus. In the past year, God used them precious as preachers of the Word of God and as lecturers, for example, at leadership seminars and master classes. At all times, God brings about repentance, purification and spiritual restoration through His living Word. Isaiah also experienced this.

Let's look at verse 8: "Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" And I said, "Here am I. Send me!" Isaiah had received God's sin-forgiving grace. His unclean lips had been burned by the hot coals of repentance. Now God cried out with the broken shepherd heart, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" God was eager to cooperate with Isaiah. God was looking for a messenger who was willing to be sent. Isaiah understood this heart of God. When he thought of how much God longed to send a messenger to His sinful people, he could not remain uninvolved or passive. Isaiah had just experienced the cleansing grace of God through the fiery coal from the altar. Should he use this grace only for his own benefit? Should he remain satisfied and self-righteous with his own salvation? No, he could not! He was heartily determined and ready to be used by God from now on. Therefore, he did not need any time for reflection. He could answer God's call immediately and without hesitation: "Here am I. Send me!"

Do we hear and understand this heart of God, with which God also calls today? "Whom shall I send? Who will go for us?" Whom shall I send to the Bonn and Rhine-Sieg campuses? To the EMA and the HHG? To the 360 universities in Germany, to the 1,700 universities in Europe and to the Muslim world? Whom should I send? Who wants to go for God? How do we live with God's calling because our God is holy?

The house church of God's servant M. Peter and M. Sarah heard God's call more than 41 years ago. They decided to give up their own plans and security of life in South Korea and serve young people in Germany as missionaries. Because God is holy, God's servant was able to give up a worldly career and even his doctorate to serve the young people in Germany and Europe in holy fear of God through intensive Bible study and life fellowship. When he did not compromise with God's mission despite slander and persecution, God worked very powerfully and raised up natives and missionaries of the Next Generation as influential shepherds, Bible teachers and spiritual leaders.

What did God continue to speak to Isaiah? Let us read verses 9 and 10: "He said, "Go and tell this people: 'Be ever hearing, but never understanding; be ever seeing, but never perceiving.' Make the heart of this people calloused; make their ears dull and close their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed." God had trusted Isaiah with his great hope and vision. But God also taught Isaiah not to have false expectations. Although Isaiah preached to the people for more than 40 years, the people would have hardened hearts and deaf ears, so that they would not hear, nor understand, nor be converted. But God's broken shepherd heart for this people was unchanging. He would call them to repentance day after day through Isaiah and reveal His hope day after day. What a patient and what a non-giving God! Just like Isaiah, God sends us daily to the campus and to our university and college to prophesy the Word of God to the spiritually dead bones with Ezekiel 37:10. He is sending us to form 10,000 one-to-one Bible study teams this year and to prepare to raise up 100,000 Bible teachers.

In this passage, we have been thinking about God's holiness and God's shepherd heart. When Isaiah came to the temple of God seeking God's nearness, God revealed Himself to him in a vision. He saw God sitting on the throne and responding. He saw that God

is holy and all the lands are full of the glory of God. He repented of his unclean lips and experienced the complete restoration and how God called him with His hope. Let us also fear this holy God! Let us see with spiritual eyes that God reigns and that all lands are full of His glory! Let us - like Isaiah and like numerous predecessors in faith - live differently from this world and give our new life to proclaim this sovereign, holy God as God's messengers and share God's vision and hope with young people.

## 2. The Holy Stump (11-13)

Isaiah wondered, based on these words of God, how long he would have to preach to people with hardened hearts. Let us look at verses 11 and 12: "Then I said, "For how long, O Lord?" And he answered: "Until the cities lie ruined and without inhabitant, until the houses are left deserted and the fields ruined and ravaged, until the Lord has sent everyone far away and the land is utterly forsaken." We can well understand Isaiah's question, "Lord, for how long?" We also sometimes ask "For how long, O Lord" - should I go to this campus? For how long should I serve this sheep? How long will it take until an Abraham and a Sarah of faith are raised up? How long, until spiritual revival?

God promised Isaiah that God's judgment would come upon His hardened people. Yes, the cities would be without inhabitants and the houses without people. These words refer to the taking away into Babylonian captivity. God's judgment would even be repeated until only a small remnant, less than 10 percent, would remain. The people would not accept Isaiah's words. They would hate Isaiah and later even cut him to pieces.

But despite these sobering prospects, Isaiah believed in the almighty and living God. He believed that God would restore his people in his time, even send the Messiah. With this faith, Isaiah was ready to fulfill God's mission, even without visible changes, and to be faithful to God's calling until the end. Then God

gave Isaiah his vision of the holy seeds and holy stumps in verse 13. Let us read verse 13: "And though a tenth remains in the land, it will again be laid waste. But as the terebinth and oak leave stumps when they are cut down, so the holy seed will be the stump in the land."

In the midst of the judgments to come, God would preserve a holy remnant. Through this holy remnant, God would continue His history and also fulfill it. God testified to His hope that this small remnant would be as precious as a holy seed and as the stump of a tree that sprouts again.

Let us read the leading verse 13 again: "And though a tenth remains in the land, it will again be laid waste. But as the terebinth and oak leave stumps when they are cut down, so the holy seed will be the stump in the land." When a tree is cut down, this looks like the end. But the stump - as with an oak and lime tree - can sprout again and produce new shoots and fruit. Holy seeds and holy stumps are those who, in a spiritually corrupt and godless age, do not simply conform to the world, but set themselves apart and hold on to their identity as holy seeds and stumps - no matter what the cost.

We remember the Reformed Christians in France, called "Huguenots". Between about 1520 and 1787 (Edict of Versailles), there were repeated waves of fierce persecution with pogroms, massacres and burnings as heretics. One of them was Marie Durand, who was imprisoned in a prison tower for 38 years under the most adverse conditions. Instead of renouncing her faith and enjoying freedom, she lived as a shepherdess and pastor to her fellow prisoners. Because of such saintly stumps, the Huguenots were able to survive despite persecutions and exert great spiritual influence to this day despite being a minority.

Let us learn about Isaiah's faith!

Let us thank God for having established holy stumps among us even in this time, which God uses precious for His history. Samuel Abraham and Joshua are holy stumps. After

their victory of faith in high school, they did not simply act according to the general consensus by going on a trip around the world or focusing only on their studies. Rather, they set themselves apart from the world by giving their hearts to explore the Word of God, serving us with excellent history lectures, and also receiving spiritual training through life fellowship. Thus, God is raising them to be Bible teachers for their fellow students, as well as spiritual teachers for this generation. We have also been encouraged by a young woman who chose Isaiah 6:13 as her key verse for the year and decided to stay in Germany instead of seeking her own advantage. God use her as a Bible teacher for the young people in Germany (and as far away as China) and give her the victory of faith in her training.

God's hope for each of us is to be a holy stump and live a life set apart from the world and consecrated for God. Instead of asking "How long?" we may fulfill God's holy mission until the end, serving God's work with Isaiah's faith and with Isaiah's vision until the end. How long? Until every campus has an Abraham, a Sarah, and twelve of Jesus' disciples raised up. Until the Law School is transformed into the House of Prayer for World Mission. Until the philosophical faculty is changed from a place of deceptive philosophies to a place of truth. Until the Rhine-Sieg University of Applied Sciences is changed into a missionary-sending campus. Until 120 mission bases are established and Germany as a shepherd nation and Europe as a missionary sending continent are needed for the world mission. For how long? Not only for a few years; not only until retirement; but until our Lord Jesus comes again in great power and glory!

With Isaiah's faith and vision, we may overcome the prevailing spirit of the age, which has even deceived many Christians and made churches useless to God, and serve the work of God in this generation with the identity of holy seeds and holy stumps. Thanks be to God that He has set apart and left holy stumps who have not bowed their knees to the spirit of the age but stand firm

on the truth of God's Word. Among us God has left e.g. holy stumps like Sh. Peter Sch., Sh. Warmherz, M. Dr. Petrus, Sh. Dr. Johannes, Sh. Peter, who serve the work of God with Isaiah's faith and vision. We also pray for our Josiah and Esra-Team, who grew up from childhood in the spiritual environment and life community, that they may daily separate themselves from the zeitgeist of this world and grow into the holy stumps through life community and spiritual training, and whom God, like Isaiah, is using preciously in this generation.

Today we have learned that God sits on the throne, that He reigns and that all the lands are full of the glory of God. This holy God cleanses our unclean lips of unbelief. He calls us with His broken shepherd heart to be His messengers who serve this people and this generation by faith and with the vision and hope of God until the end. May God grant us the personal decision to separate ourselves from the world and the spirit of the times and to work together with God as holy saints and holy stumps for the spiritual revival of Germany, Europe and the Muslim world.

Let us read the key verse 13: "And though a tenth remains in the land, it will again be laid waste. But as the terebinth and oak leave stumps when they are cut down, so the holy seed will be the stump in the land."