

Worship Series 9 Pentecost 9 – July 25, 2021

Text: Sanctus

Theme: Worship Series 9 “We Stand in the Presence of God”

**As we continue our series on worship, that last week we were at the end of the Proper Preface when we sing a very important part of the liturgy. It is the Sanctus. Remember, we have been ascending the second peak of the liturgy. We are headed toward the reception of the body and blood of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins. As we make our way up the mountain, where we will see our Lord in His flesh and blood, we remember the time when the Lord was revealed to Isaiah, the Prophet, and we sing the words of the Sanctus which harken back to the call of Isaiah. Listen to Isaiah 6.**

**“In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him were seraphs, 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.’”**

**“At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke. ‘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.”**

**“Then one of the seraphs 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.’”**

**Isaiah found himself face to face with the Lord God Almighty, as we will be in just a few minutes, and he was terrified. There he was, just an ordinary man standing in the temple of God looking upon strange angel beings called seraphim. The seraphim called out to one another, “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.” And their voices were so powerful that the building shook. I love the low notes of the Sanctus when we feel the vibration of the organ pipes run through the pews.**

**Isaiah thought he was in deep trouble because he was a sinful man and was suddenly looking upon the holy God. Like us, unworthy and sinful, he stood before the altar knowing that he had no sacrifice great enough to pay for his own sins.**

**That is the point of the Sanctus. As we sing it, we stand in Isaiah’s shoes and see that they fit quite nicely. Like Isaiah, you and I have lived sinful lives this week. We have made choices that**

**go against God. We have shown disrespect to authority. We have gossiped about others. We have taken God's name in vain. We have squandered our time, money and talents instead of offering our first and best to God. We have done all of this and much more in our thoughts, in our words and even in our actual deeds. How dare any of us come before this altar?**

**Isaiah knew he was too unworthy to proclaim God's Word, but God fixed that for him. The seraph flew down and took a burning coal from God's high altar and touched Isaiah's lips with it. Immediately, he was made clean. All of his guilt and all of his sin was burned away. It was that simple. Or was it? It was that simple for Isaiah. One moment he was sinful and the next he was pure and holy. But it was not so simple for Jesus. That burning offering on God's altar from which the angel took the coal was the Lord Jesus Christ. Isaiah's forgiveness cost Jesus his life and soul as did your forgiveness and my forgiveness.**

**When we sing the Sanctus, we look upon the altar and we see the bread and the wine ready for its holy service. The elements are prepared so that the true body and blood of Jesus Christ will move through them. And we will be made holy; not by anything we have done. Not by any amount of right living or right teaching or right choices, but purely and simply by the Grace of God. Just as Isaiah**

**dumbly stood there as the seraph did all the work, so we come forward to receive that which we do not understand and did not earn, but which our faith craves and desperately needs.**

**What do I do to receive this? We don't do anything. It is pure gift barreling straight for us. It is unworldly power bearing down on us like a runaway locomotive and it is all gift, nothing we have to do, not even anything we can do. All we could do is reject the gift, and why on earth would we reject pure grace, pure love and pure power?**

**Our Old Testament reading tells us about the sign given to us that the Lord would never again destroy the whole earth by flood. Every time we see a rainbow in the sky, we are reminded that God keeps his promises. That's what the rainbow means. God keeps his promises. The rainbow is a phenomenal Christian symbol because it is a symbol created by God himself to strengthen our faith. The burning coal on the lips did not purify Isaiah anymore than the rainbow prevents flooding. They are both signs of a deeper more important reality. The burning coal is a sign of the sacrifice God has made for Isaiah in the ultimate sacrifice of Jesus to pay for his sins. The bread and the wine are the signs of the very body and blood of Jesus that flow through these common elements to forgive our sins and nourish our souls.**

**As we sing the Sanctus, we look upon the bread and the wine on the altar that has now been unveiled and we see through these common elements composed of the juice of grapes, flour and water. We see through them and see the very body and blood of Jesus Christ who hung on the cross, died, was laid in the tomb, rose from the dead and conquered Satan forever. When we see that rainbow in the sky, we remember that God always fulfills his promises. When we see that bread and wine, we remember His promise to us of life and salvation. When the bread and the wine touch our lips, like the burning coal, we are purified as the body and blood of Christ enter into us, and we are ready to enter paradise as soon as our work here is through.**