

Commentary on the Gospel for Sat, Jul 12th 2014

I was sitting at an eighth grade homeroom desk when I heard that President Kennedy was dead. I remember the exact stop sign where I sat in my parents' car when I heard that Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., had been killed. My memory is fuzzy as to where I was when I heard that Bobby Kennedy had been killed but I will never forget that day. And who could forget where they were when they saw a plane fly into the second of the twin towers on live television? Traumatic events such as these remain with us for a lifetime. The prophet Isaiah had such an event. It was the death of the impressive ruler, King Uzziah. Will there be people who remember the Kennedys and Dr. King 2,700 years from now? Perhaps. It is possible, though, that future generations will know as much about them as we do about King Uzziah. Memory of even the most impressive leaders generally fades.

However, what Isaiah experienced in the year King Uzziah died will impact the lives of ordinary people for generations to come. Isaiah saw the Lord. How many times had Isaiah gone into the temple and not seen the Lord? Then, for who knows what reason, his eyes were opened and he saw the One who was always present. He saw the Lord high and lifted up, surrounded by angelic beings who cried out that the Lord is "Holy, Holy, Holy." Isaiah had worshiped God many times and had probably even sung psalms and hymns that declared God's holiness. But now he realized that his worship paled in comparison to that of the heavenly hosts. He also knew that no one can see the Lord and live so he cried out, "I am doomed." However, the Lord cleansed Isaiah, removed his wickedness, purged his sins, and commissioned him for ministry. The Lord asked, "Whom shall I send? Who will go for us?" Isaiah replied, "Here I am. Send me." Isaiah prophesied under several different kings and ultimately received the martyrs' crown. He saw the Lord and could not refrain from speaking of it. He saw the Lord and took up the pen and wrote about it. He saw the Lord and nothing was ever the same.

The psalmist sees the same glorious Lord: robed in splendor and girt about with strength. God is holy, lives forever, and is the everlasting King. This God scared Isaiah. The psalmist says that, although God is everlasting and that his throne from which he rules stands firm forever, God gives the world stability and gives his children decrees that can be trusted. All of God's power and might is focused on the good of his children.

Jesus had this same view of the Father. Can he destroy both soul and body in hell? Yes. If we deny Jesus before others, will he deny us before his Father? Yes. But Jesus tells us not to be afraid. Two sparrows are not worth much at all but the Father knows when each one of them dies. He knows the number of hairs on our head. So, Jesus says, do not be afraid. Do not be afraid to proclaim the good news from the housetops. And do not be afraid of the Father. Jesus calls him "my heavenly Father." He also calls him "your Father." He is your Father and my Father. He is powerful, mighty, holy, the great King. He is worthy of worship, honor, and praise.

World leaders come and go; the Lord reigns forever.

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