

Isa 6:1-8
You are God's gift to the world

Intro

You are God's gift to the world
Roberto & walking the talk – Jane
Telling others

How real is our worship?

What makes bad art?
A good image
Life is good
Sexuality is good
60's retro shapes – even the dancer
Cannabis
Strong resonance
Make love not war
Be free
System is wrong
Make a new world
Imaginative
Inspiring

All this is possible if you buy an Ipod
Actually defaces values the image seeks to promote
The infinite, made finite, through imitation
Like a mina bird
All that – this imaginative, in some ways inspiring image
All that – is just about going out and buying an Ipod
Suddenly any beauty this image had is gone
Just effect.
A fake – an imitation
Not good art – actually bad art

Seeks to captivate & not set free

Image

A lot of resonance
A man holding an injured child
Little girl
Prodigal Daughter
Really the running father
A father who waited for his daughter to return
Even though she had rejected him & all he stood for
Life – vibrancy – energy
The finite, pointing to the infinite in adoration
Reality
More I look
Could be me
Could be people I love
Could be our broken world
Profound freedom
Love letter

How real is our worship?

- We can reduce God to our level
- Through our worship
- His infinite love,
- His great mercy
- That bends, breaks, remakes us
- Is reduced to just another song
- Might be sung really well
- Band might be really good
- Just an effect
- Like the Ipod
- An imitation, like a mina bird

- Real worship is lived
- touches every part of our lives
- Simple as good art & bad art
- Reality versus effect
- Like a mina bird sing a different song
- Worship just something we do
- Like listening to an Ipod

Isaiah

- Like to think of him in the Temple
- Perhaps actually worshipping
- Never could forget what happened next
- Whole of reality as he knows it torn away
- Like a veil
- Actually sees the Lord
- Sees the unseeable
- To see God was to die
- Moses, Ezekiel
- with God all things are possible
- So simple
- I saw the Lord...
- Cindy Ritches –
- Didn't really believe many people
- So simple
- So simple
- I saw the Lord
- Read this description
- Reality in these pages
- Communicates something we probably struggle to voice
- Reality of Isaiah's experience
- Lifetime spent reading the Torah
- Attending in the Temple

- sees the Lord
- The person from whom even the Seraphs
- Have to hide their faces & bodies
- As they sing of God's holiness to each other
- Experience is totally terrifying
- Because suddenly
- As he sees,
- As he experiences the full weight, the full greatness & majesty & purity of the living God
- He knows he's totally lost
- Miracle
- Isaiah encounters the living God
- And instead of being condemned
- Finds himself forgiven
- Not only that
- Sent out to the people of unclean lips
- That he was part of
- To go for him – to walk for him
- To be like him, to be his messenger

How real is our worship?

True worship – breaks us, restores us, remakes us

“Batter my heart, three-person'd God, for you
As yet but knock, breathe, shine, and seek to mend;
That I may rise and stand, o'erthrow me, and bend
Your force to break, blow, burn, and make me new.”

True worship sends us out into the world

To be like him, messengers of our Father in heaven
To walk for him.

The problem of mission

That's just where the problem starts

- Life is tough
 - o Not just inconvenient things that happen
 - o Like losing your car keys, leaving a laptop on a train, getting a speeding ticket
 - o Life can be really tough
- And on top of that
 - o On average people just don't want to know
 - o Nice people
 - o People like you & me
 - o Seem to get along fine without church
 - o They just don't want to know

I'm at a party at work

- I've spent a whole year
- In a dead end job
- Winding down insurance companies
- And it's the Summer office party
- Andersen consulting "we're simply the best"
- Watching all the younger, more ambitious, thrusting executives
- Working the room
- Could be at Andersen's
- And I'm feeling a deep frustration
- Over months of repetitive & boring work
- Work that makes me feel undervalued
- Haven't once been able to talk to anyone
- About the thing that is most important to me
- The thing that at the weekends makes me want to sing
- Reminds me of all that I am in this great universe that's so confusing
- Haven't once been able to share the wonder

- The joy of knowing Jesus
- And I'm slowly dying inside
- I'm slowly suffocating
- Spiritually I feel like I can't breathe
- Want to talk to someone
- Want my faith to have some meaning in this context
- But I'm an apple
- I'm an apple & they are all pears
- Chris – standing there in front of me
- In my frustration & angst
- This is how I open the conversation
- "What do you think about God!"
- Conversation follows
- Chris is frankly embarrassed
- I shoot from the hip
- For about 3 minutes afterwards
- As I ride off in the taxi afterwards
- Have a feeling exultation
- My wife – so helpful in these situations
- Gently points out to me
- Perhaps not the best way of going about it

Probably much more emotionally intelligent than me

- Probably never happened to you
- But if it has Isaiah can help

You see, life for Isaiah wasn't all that easy

- For Isaiah as well as the rest of Israel
- the king was dead
- King Uzziah had died
- Amidst the potential power vacuum
- A foreign empire gathering strength on Israel's doorstep
- Were as skilled at war as they were cruel

- Who would ultimately sack the Northern Kingdom of Israel
- And just stop short of annihilating Judah
- These were the Assyrians

Not only that

- Isaiah sent to a people
- Hadn't seen what he had seen
- Hadn't heard what he had heard
- & as we see
- Who wouldn't want to see, or hear, or turn

First Big lesson about our mission to the world outside

- Words of judgement
- "Make the mind of this people stiff, and stop their ears..."
- Its God who saves
- Not my clever arguments
- Or brilliant pastoral manner
- Its actually God who saves
- Why the most important thing we can do for our friends
- Our families
- Our colleagues
- All the people our lives touch & who touch us in some way
- The most important thing we can do for them is to pray for them
- Because the only way they will ever see
- Or hear God
- Is through God
- God isn't limited to our prayers
- But when his children
- Get down on their knees
- And pray persistently

- Pray doggedly
- Come rain or shine
- Year on year
- It does something to us – but more importantly it does something powerful for them
- Pete Greig & the steady drip of water on a boulder
- Gradually wears away the stone
- Then turns to ice when chill winds blow
- And eventually shatters it
- Something happens when we pray
- Pray & really mean it

Leads to the 2nd big lesson

- "Woe is me! I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips & my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts..."
- Kid ourselves that we're somehow better
- More like the people around us than we realise
- Only big difference is that we know Jesus
- Big difference
- But like Isaiah found out
- Probably guilty of some of the same sins
- The same peccadillos
- & bad habits as them
- God hasn't finished with us yet
- In his eyes we are saints
- But we can still make a pretty good go at being sinners too
- And we definitely feel tempted to be sinners with monotonous regularity
- The more people get to know the real us
- With all our problems
- Our insecurities & hang ups

- The more likely they will be able to see
- To really see the reality of God's grace in our lives
- Why the heart of our mission
- Is relationship
- Know a God who gave everything
- To bring us into right relationship with him
- Sends us out into the world
- Into relationship with those who don't know him
- Why its so important
- J John's first rule of evangelism
- To be normal and sensible
- A rule I definitely broke with Chris!
- To be just ourselves
- Not hide behind our Christian Jargon
- Or our church networks

Leads on to the 3rd Big lesson

- Back @ work
- In the days after Insurance
- Thrusting executive myself
- Doing insolvency & restructuring
- & enjoying it
- High fli-er – started his own business
- Sold it
- Come into our department
- That time of the year
- Near September
- New Alpha course
- Drop into conversation
- I've heard of that – I think I want to do it
- Watched in amazement
- Not only went to the first night
- Did the whole course

- & became a Christian
- & I hadn't done a thing

3rd Big lesson

- What the seraphim cry before God
- As Isaiah looks on horror struck
- "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord, The whole earth is full of his glory..."
- God is in the world
- In places & with people we probably couldn't dream of
- Assyrians – God's instrument of punishment
- Cyrus his instrument of restoration – 45:1-7
- The earth is full of his glory
- God really is reaching out to all people
- Chances are most people have experienced him in some way
- In the case of Jonathan
- Xian friend – who had told him how great Alpha was - & had probably been praying for him
- Not a question of how can I convince this person
- But what is God doing in this person's life
- How is God & has God reached out to them

4th lesson

- "I saw the Lord"
- Safely hazard a guess
- No-one seen the Lord
- All experienced him
- In some shape or form
- All chosen
- We need to remember
- Something a hospital chaplain
- Once said to me
- When we're talking to people who don't know God

- When we go to work
- Go to school or college
- At the school gates
- Greatest gift that God has given in our situation
- Is us
- Not J John, Bill Johnson, Mike Ritchesg, Nicky Gumbel
- Its you
- You are God's gift to your friends
- Your families
- The people round you at work
- The people you meet on the street
- Sometimes may not feel that way
- But its true
- God chose Isaiah
- To preach judgement to a people who were comfortable
- And to preach salvation to a people who had lost all hope
- To literally walk in the way of his God
- Isn't it interesting words of Ch 5 & 6
- Actually frame the gospels
- You are chosen
- In just the same way
- God will use you
- In ways that you don't understand
- Capacity to use you
- Beyond your wildest dreams

- Worship

- God gives us the grace to truly worship him
- Broken & remade before him
- And sent out to be the people we were always made to be

- That we literally become his presence in the world
- God who does this & not us

Taking Nazaria

Soldier

Iraq, Afghanistan, Bosnia

Amazing stories of how God has met him there

- Leaving Nazaria
- British troops – leaving Basra
- Swamp
- Road – high road to Nazaria
- Australian territory – they would escort through
- Met outside Nazaria
- Colonel Jake
- Greatest sessions man he knew
- Bad news
- Australians hadn't been into Nazaria for months
- Last time they had
- They had been completely mullered
- Things had got very messy
- Suddenly the horrible truth dawned on them
- Drive through Nazaria
- No armour
- Truck loads full of petrol
- Totally vulnerable to anything the terrorists might do
- My friend sick in hospital
- I will give you every place where you set your feet
- Discharged himself
- Near the front – maybe even the head
- In an open top land Rover
- Hand grenades tied along a piece of string
- Behind a heavy machine gun
- Looking around

- Flight of birds
- Into the middle distance for any movement
- Total amazement
- Not a shot was fired – streets totally deserted
- Met in the evening by one of his comrades
- Couldn't believe what had happened
- Totally expecting massive loss of life
- Not all
- Friend had a dream – junior demon had been beaten up by a senior demon for failure
- Intelligence intercepted a call
- From the chief of one of the terrorist organisations, to the local head in Nazaria
- Sacked – should have been carnage
- Confused – thought it was a show of force from the British
- So pulled back

- You are God's gift to the world
- And God will give you every place where you set your feet.

Ministry

- Those who are beaten up
- Those who want the gift of evangelism

Questions:

- 1) When is our worship like good art & when is it like bad art?
- 2) What makes the difference
- 3) Have we ever had an embarrassing evangelistic encounter!
- 4) What did we learn?
- 5) vs 9-10 - the judgement is difficult to understand, but can we take solace from the fact that God saves?
- 6) Have you ever had your prayers for friends & family to come to faith answered?
- 7) vs 5 - How can we be more normal and sensible as a church? As individuals
- 8) vs 3 - Does it help to ask the question "where is God in this person's life", rather than, "how can I convince them to believe in Jesus"?
- 9) You are a gift of God to the world, do you feel like it?!