



## Sermon, Sunday February 16, 2025

### "Stump Faith"

**SCRIPTURE: Isaiah 6:9-13** <sup>9</sup> And he said, "Go and say to this people: 'Keep listening, but do not comprehend; keep looking, but do not understand.' <sup>10</sup> Make the mind of this people dull, and stop their ears, and shut their eyes, so that they may not look with their eyes and listen with their ears and comprehend with their minds and turn and be healed." <sup>11</sup> Then I said, "How long, O Lord?" And he said, "Until cities lie waste without inhabitant, and houses without people, and the land is utterly desolate; <sup>12</sup> until the Lord sends everyone far away, and vast is the emptiness in the midst of the land. <sup>13</sup> Even if a tenth part remain in it, it will be burned again, like a terebinth or an oak whose stump remains standing when it is felled." (The holy seed is its stump.)

#### Introduction: The holy seed

Today is the sixth Sunday after Epiphany. The years 736-701 BC, when the prophet Isaiah was active, were a time of confusion. At that time, Israel was divided into Northern Israel and Southern Judah. Northern Israel fought against the Assyrian Empire and fell in 721 BC. Southern Judah surrendered to Assyria in 701 BC and became a nation that paid tribute. The future of the Israeli people is bleak. In this situation, the prophet Isaiah was active.

The Old Testament prophets viewed human history from God's perspective. Prophet Isaiah believed that the reason Northern Israel and Southern Judah fell was because they did not obey God. (Isaiah Chapter 1) So, Prophet Isaiah told the Jewish people, '**Learn to do right! Seek justice, encourage the oppressed. Defend the cause of the fatherless, plead the case of the widow.**' (Isaiah 1:17). However, even after hearing Isaiah's cry, the residents of Jerusalem did not repent and did not return to the Lord.

Prophet Isaiah described this situation in today's text; '**Keep listening, but do not comprehend; keep looking, but do not understand.**' (Isaiah 6:9). Furthermore, Isaiah 6:10 said, '**Make the mind of these people dull, stop their ears, and shut their eyes, so that they may not look with their eyes, and listen with their ears, and comprehend with their minds, and turn and be healed.**'

However, Prophet Isaiah found it difficult to accept the Lord's will. So, the prophet Isaiah asks in verse 11 of today's text, '**How long, O Lord?**' However, the Lord's answer to this question was, '**Until cities lie waste without inhabitants, and houses without people, and the land is utterly desolate.**' As can be seen from the Lord's answer, there was no hope for the people of Judea and Jerusalem. However, in this situation, the prophet Isaiah heard the words of the Lord, '**But as the terebinth and oak leave stumps when they are cut down, so the holy seed will be the stump in the land.**' (Isaiah 6:13)

The stump is unsightly. No one looks at a stump and thinks that a tree will come back to life there. However, if the stump is not completely dead, new leaves and branches will grow from it. In today's text, the prophet Isaiah called the stump the '**holy seed.**' Seeds may look unsightly on the outside, but when planted in the ground and exposed to water and sunlight, they become abundant.

How do you judge the times we live in today? Do you think this era is abundant? Or do you think it is as desolate as the days of Isaiah?

#### Body: Stump Faith

In fact, there is much to consider rich in this world. The United States, where we live, is the world's best in military power, economic power, capital power, and consumption power. However, we cannot say that our society is prosperous based on external appearances alone. Rather, the society we live in is poor on the inside.



If our society is driven by the mindset of using overwhelming force to suppress those who have different thoughts from ours, this shows the violence of our society. These things only appear when our souls are devastated. From the eyes of Prophet Isaiah, our society will look like the stump of a cut down tree.

In today's text, Prophet Isaiah exclaims that the moment we think the world is completely ruined, when we think we are on the verge of death, the Lord creates new life. The stump appears dead, but new life begins there. As today's text puts it, the 'holy seed' becomes the foundation for life to grow from the stump.

The '**holy seed**' in today's text is not a dead seed but a living seed. For these seeds to grow, they do not necessarily have to be numerous. It may be a small amount, but this seed must have life.

Having life in the holy seed means that we are united with the Lord. Those who are united with the Lord are those who hope and believe that the Lord is waiting for us after our death.

In today's text, Isaiah had eyes to see the holy seed in the stump. But not everyone can see the holy seed in the stump like Isaiah.

The first part of today's text, Isaiah 6:1-8, describes Isaiah's calling experience. Isaiah sees a strange vision in the temple. Isaiah laments that he must die before the holiness and glory of God. One of the seraphs touches Isaiah's mouth with a coal from the altar and said, '**See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for.**'. Afterwards, Isaiah hears the voice of God asking, '**Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?**'. Isaiah said, '**Here am I; Send me!**'. (Isaiah 6:8).

In this verse, the sentence '**Here am I**' is a translation of the Hebrew pronunciation '**Hineni (הינני)**'. The Hebrew word '**Hineni**' contains our trust and obedience to God, '**I am ready**' or '**I am Absolutely focused on you.**'. This sentence does not simply mean that Isaiah was ready to fulfill his calling, but that he experienced inner peace through the abundant experience of grace in which his sins were forgiven. So, Isaiah stopped worrying about what his fate would be. Isaiah did not despair even when faced with stump-like situations.

Additionally, Isaiah's confession, '**Here am I,**' also means, '**I am ready to accept death.**' In other words, Isaiah was able to answer '**Here am I**' because he knew that there was a Creator God waiting for him even in the world after death.

## **Conclusion: Calling from the Lord for us**

Now let's summarize today's message. In Luke 5:8, there is a story about Simon Peter, who met Jesus while fishing and confessed to Jesus, '**Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!**'. From then on, the fishermen who met Jesus became his disciples.

In this verse, the confession '**I am a sinful man!**' is an acknowledgment that our life comes from a holy God. In other words, we acknowledge that without the Lord, our country, property, and accomplishments in life cannot guarantee our lives.

People who know this do not exaggerate themselves to impress others, nor do they belittle themselves. Because we know that our lives are enriched before the Lord, a holy being. People who have this fundamental realization gain freedom.

Ultimately, we can experience true freedom when we understand and accept our lives in union with the Lord. Also, we can live in an attitude of obedience to the Lord.

This is a calling from the Lord for us. Throughout the history of Christianity, Christians have lived with this calling and the stump of life no matter what situation they are in. I pray that the Lord recognizes us as the stump of life and the holy seed. I hope you all enjoy these blessings. **Amen!**

