

Sunday, October 7, 2018
Unselfie: Serving in a Selfie World
Isaiah 6:1-8

When was the last time you took a selfie? One of the biggest advancements in the social media world occurred when someone invented the reverse camera... and the selfie was born. Without the help of anyone, we could now suddenly take hundreds of pictures of ourselves until we find the exact one that we feel best portrays how we want the world to see us. Now, the social-media world is stuffed full of millions of selfies – all of extremely happy looking people. If you didn't know any better, you would think that we live in the happiest society in the history of the world if you based that solely on a perusal of people's selfies. But the opposite is actually true. Our self-obsessed minds that constantly comparing ourselves to others have contributed towards the highest depression rates on record.

Our selfie-obsessed society isn't really just about pictures. It has everything to do with our view of the world, our relationships, our goals and our God. Our "selfie world" conditions us to spend our time, money and energy on what we want... and what we want is often linked to the world's selfie standards... and thus what the world pressures us into wanting becomes what we value most. While our selfies scream out, "look at how good I have it," God has a deeper and better plan for us. He wants us to take an **Unselfie- and learn to Serve**.

Today, we begin a series called, "Unselfie – Serving in a Selfie World." It will emphasize the Serve portion of our Connect, Grow, Serve mission.

Turn to Isaiah 6.

It was January of 1995. I was a senior in High School and I had my whole life ahead of me. I had plans to become a professional musician. I had just finished playing my instrument in a Sunday church worship service and had slipped into a seat in the back top of the balcony. There were 2 things about the auditorium where we were meeting that stand out in my memory: It was packed with people, and it was also under construction. There was a hard cement floor. There was a makeshift temporary platform at the front. There was actual

scaffolding all around the perimeter. Most of the people were sitting on metal folding chairs. But it was in that crowded service, from my seat all the way in the upper back of the balcony, that God broke into my selfie life and personally called me to serve Him. At the time, I had never taken a selfie. But my life reflected the 1995 version of a selfie-consumed person. I didn't know much of what it meant to serve. I really only knew how to do what I wanted and what would make me look my best to the world.

That day, my pastor at the time, spoke from Isaiah 6. God used that message to call me out to serve Him in ministry. By the end of that sermon, I found myself sheepishly walking all the way to the front, stepping over construction materials and ducking under scaffolding. I would kneel alone at a make-shift altar and I surrendered to serve God with my life. I learned that day that there is no selfie in true surrender. Ever since then, God has been chipping away at the selfie in my life and replacing it with a heart for serving. Today, allow me to take you into Isaiah so we can learn to Serve in a Selfie world.

Isaiah was one of the greatest prophets of the OT. His prophetic ministry speaks into our lives today as he spoke amazing words in this book that better connect us to God.

When Isaiah was growing up in Judah, there was a powerful, successful and prosperous king, Uzziah. This king reigned for over 50 years in Judah and times were good. It was a peaceful and prosperous era for Judah and people felt safe and secure under Uzziah's leadership.

- Successful in conquest against the Philistines (even built his own cities there)
- He invented catapult-type devices to be used in battle.
- Fame and reputation spread internationally
- Built 3 very strong towers in Jerusalem
- Obtained incredible amounts of livestock all over the place
- Had vineyards and gardens everywhere
- Developed a huge army of well-equipped and very skilled warriors
- The people of Judah very likely started trusting in him rather than in God.

As a renown, successful leader, Uzziah became very prideful -and in his pride, openly disrespected the holy presence of God. Maybe he took a selfie of himself in the holiest place. He was immediately struck with leprosy, which eventually took his life. This no doubt brought a time of fear and uncertainty to the land of Judah. People had found their identity in this larger than life leader - Uzziah. Now that he was dead, there was a real question of *“who is the leader?”* *“And what are we going to do?”* These were the headlines of the newsfeed when God broke Isaiah out of a selfie-consumed world and taught him to serve God instead of self.

Isaiah 6:1-8

The first thing that God did for Isaiah is to teach him...

I. Find Your Identity in the Lord

Isaiah and the people of Judah had gotten comfortable under Uzziah’s strong leadership. They might have found their identity in him. But as God showed Isaiah this powerful vision of Himself, Isaiah was confronted with these 2 facts:

- He had minimized the power and presence of Almighty God
- He had also minimized the severity of His own sin (and that of Judah)

We are often guilty of the same 2 tendencies. We get caught up in life and fail to see God for who He is. We also love to minimize the severity of our own sin before the eyes of Almighty God.

Instead of finding security in our land of safety and prosperity... and in ourselves... we must learn to find our identity in the Lord and His righteous, sovereign rule over us. If He indeed is sovereign over us, then don’t be surprised if He calls us out of our life of selfies and into a life of serving.

II. Learn from Others’ Respect of God

In Isaiah’s case, he is overcome by these powerful angelic creatures in how they honor and respect the Holy presence of God. Part of how God broke him out of His selfie mindset was to put his device down and watch how others who were connected to God emulated what it means to worship Him.

It is so important to be around others who have a healthy respect of the Lord. Their example to help us avoid minimizing His holy, powerful presence.

People at Grove kneeling...

Isaiah was overcome by the actual presence of God, He was overcome by the words proclaimed by the worshipping angels. He was overcome by the volume of the worship. But he doesn't take a selfie to prove that he is there. It would never do this scene justice anyway. And he doesn't even join in the angelic song of praise. Instead, Isaiah responds in humiliated defeat before the Lord...

Isaiah 6:5 ...It's almost as if he takes a realistic selfie instead of a wanna be selfie. You see, before the Holy eyes of God, we don't have to pretend to be someone else. We're not in His presence to impress Him or to show Him how happy we are on the surface – even when we're broken inside.

III. Learn to Express Open Brokenness Before God

Isaiah, in these honest moments of introspection, reveals what is true and actual about himself as well as how he felt next to God. While certainly he felt shame, what he said and did in verse 5 was not shameful. In fact, it was honorable.

We already know how the story ends, that he says, "here am I, send me" and he becomes this great prophet of God. But in these moments, before He was called to serve, He was being called to UNSELFIE. He had connected with the Lord and was brought low. In these low moments, God was breaking him of his self-consumed mindset. Unbeknownst to him, God was transitioning Isaiah into a serving mindset. While the angels were shouting out God's praise, Isaiah was shouting out his own unworthiness and brokenness before God as he unselfied.

Friends, you have the freedom to do this here. You have the freedom to express your joy or your brokenness before God in this gathering. You don't have to worry about what others think. If you are, then you need to break out of a selfie mindset and realize that you're among a people who love you, who want you to connect to God – even if that means expressing brokenness before Him. I'm concerned that we're a little too guarded when it comes to responding to the Lord and maybe in our response to God, we need to Unselfie.

Look at what happens in Isaiah's broken moments before God... he isn't punished. He isn't judged. He isn't mocked or scolded. *He is cleansed.*

Isaiah 6:6-7

This foreshadows the work of Jesus for all who come to Him by faith.

This step of cleansing always precedes God's step of calling to serve.

If you have been cleansed, then you are being called by the Lord to serve Him. Serving God in a selfie world begins with being cleansed of sin by God's Grace.

Ephesians 2:8-10 For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them."

So, as God's workmanship (masterpiece), how is He calling you to serve Him? God's Word teaches that before you ever connected with Jesus, that He prepared beforehand for you to serve Him.

No matter what that might look like, your job is to surrender to God's call.

Isaiah 6:8

IV. Learn to Express Open Availability Before God

God is not asking the questions because He doesn't know the answers. He's not looking for a solution to a problem and for someone to finally step up.

Here, the triune God speaks within Himself indicating that He wants "broken and defeated Isaiah" to represent God to the world by serving Him. And instead of hoping this vision ends and life can get back to normal, Isaiah realizes that God is speaking to *Him*. God was calling *Him*. He could fight it and ignore it and deny it, but it would still be happening. *God was calling Him*. And today, God is calling to you.

Regardless of if you are homeless or wealthy, regardless of if you are a man or a woman or if you're young or old. It doesn't matter if you are talented or talentless, if you are squeaky clean or have all kinds of baggage, if God is indeed your Lord and He is and calling you to serve instead of selfie – do you have the courage to say, "Here I am. I am available."

If Isaiah, a common, uneducated, average guy was called by Almighty God to unselfie and serve Him with his life, then He can call you too.

If I, a backwards, awkward teenage guy who was afraid of people and crowds and public speaking, was able to respond to the Lord and say, Here am I, send me – then you can respond to Him too.

Will God call you to Africa? Probably not – but if He does, we want to see the selfies of you there so we can support you and pray for you.

Will He call you to do something you're not ready to do? Probably so – but He will prepare you. And we are here to help equip all to serve.

Will it be easy? – no, but it'll be worth it.

Will it be for the rest of my life? (God is not president of a Temp Service) You won't just serve Him the rest of your earthly life. His plan is for you to serve Him with your eternal life.

But until eternity future arrives, God's plan is for you to unselfie – and serve Him in this selfie world. Will you honestly say, *Here I am – send me to serve?*

In coming weeks, we're going to talk about serving God. What should we do. What our attitude looks like. Ways that we should be serving. Spiritual gifts.