

The grace, mercy, and peace of God: the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, be yours this Holy Trinity Sunday. The title for today's sermon is "What has touched your lips?", based on the Old Testament reading from Isaiah chapter 6. Let us pray.... Amen.

Many things have touched my lips in my lifetime. When I was young, rocks often touched my lips as I used to try and eat them. I didn't eat clean washed rocks, I just ate whatever rock, or what looked like a rock, I happened to come across, or so my parents and chipped tooth told me. As I grew up, I no longer ate rocks, yet they still touched my lips. There were a few times I fell off my bike while traveling too fast and had rocks, dirt, grass, pavement, and other things touch my lips. Dirt still touches my lips, but now it us usually only when I eat fresh carrots and other stuff from our garden. But in looking back at my life I can remember all kinds of stuff touching my lips to make my lips dirty like: dirt, tar, motor oil, grease, chlorine gas (and not just the diluted pool kind), I've also had hydrochloric acid and caustic soda touch my lips more than once, but those weren't the only industrial chemical which touched my lips. On the more pleasant, and clean, side, I've also had the lips of my wife and the foreheads of my kids touch my lips. While I try to keep my lips clean, I've had my fair share of things make my lips dirty.

But those outward things, like dirt, grease, or various industrial chemicals, are not what Isaiah is talking about when he mentions he had unclean lips. In today's Old Testament reading Isaiah saw the throne room of God Almighty. And Isaiah panicked! He was terrified!

Now Isaiah wasn't worried because he'd eaten some carrots out of the garden and had some dirt on his lips, or that the rest of the people were standing out in their gardens eating dirty fresh carrot. Isaiah wasn't concerned because something had splashed on his lips; Isaiah was terrified because it wasn't just his lips which were impure, he as a whole was impure. Isaiah was conceived in sin (*Psalms 51:5*), born sinful, committed many and various sins throughout his life, and lived in a nation of sinners who denied God. He had no excuse. He had no loophole to deflect his sinfulness or unrighteousness. Isaiah stood dead guilty before the Almighty God with no way to save himself.

Isaiah knew the Holy One of Israel is absolutely perfect, pure, and sinless and His absolute righteousness cannot tolerate even the slightest sin or error. Still Isaiah was there in that God given vision of God sitting on His throne in the heavenly temple. Isaiah was standing in the presence of God: the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, and it scared the pants off Isaiah because he knew that no one could see God and live. On top of seeing God, Isaiah also saw the seraphim, and heard them calling out: **“Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!”** If the sight wasn't enough, their calling shook the foundations of heaven, and the whole place filled with smoke.

In the presence of Almighty God, Isaiah instantly recognized his imperfection and was aware as to the enormity of his sinfulness. He was impure in a place which required perfect holiness. Isaiah said: **“Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!”**

And yet, am I or are you any better than Isaiah. What has touched your lips? Are your lips perfectly clean, I mean really? Does the holy Word of God grace your lips all the time, or do

other words: harsh words, hateful words, disrespectful words, hurting words, unholy, or ungodly words touch your lips? Do you use your lips to proclaim the Gospel of Christ and His salvation for all, or do you use your lips to gossip and proclaim the gospel of Satan and the world? Do you call sin ‘sin’ with your lips when you see it, even when it might hurt the feelings of those you love, or do you deny God’s Word with your lips by keeping silent or by call sin acceptable, even though the sin you see may lead to eternal separation from God and damnation for one or even both of you? Do you use our lips to confess your God-given faith in Christ and His work for your salvation all the time, or do your sin stained lips to deny your Saviour?

For we live in the same world as Isaiah, only a few thousand years separate us. We too were conceived in sin (*Psalms 51:5*), born sinful, we commit many and various sins throughout our life, and we live in a nation of sinners who deny God. We also stand before God and have no excuse. There is no loophole to deflect our sinfulness or unrighteousness. We stand equally dead guilty before the Almighty God with no way to save ourselves.

Yet, going back to the Old Testament lesson, God doesn't leave Isaiah there to squirm and to die. God did something about Isaiah's unclean lips. The seraphim took a burning coal off the altar, carried it to Isaiah, touched Isaiah's lips with it and proclaimed "**this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for.**" (Isaiah 6:7) From the very altar of God and from God's presence, forgiveness and salvation came to Isaiah.

And we have something even better. Now it may not sound as awesome as having a seraphim fly over carrying a burn coal from God's altar, still we have something better. Instead of having a messenger, or angel, of God bring us salvation, we have the Holy Spirit, God Himself, who brings to our heads, ears, and lips the very body and blood of Christ our Saviour. Before God created the world, He chose us to be in Christ Jesus and to be His children (*Ephesians 1:4*). And just as Isaiah was cleansed when the burning coal from the altar touched his lips, so our Father cleanses us in the waters of our Baptism by joining us to Jesus and His death and resurrection for us (*Romans 6*). The Holy Spirit doesn't bring a burning coal; rather He brings the crucified and resurrected body and blood of God in the flesh—the Second Person of the Trinity—Jesus Christ, directly to us. What's more, Jesus body and blood do not just atone for the sins of our lips, rather Christ Jesus atones for all our sins of body, heart, and mind, and takes away all our guilt on Himself. Jesus takes all of it as His own and gives you all of Himself, His righteousness, His holiness, and His perfection, and His forgiveness and covers you completely. Jesus death and resurrection in your place covers you completely so in the Father's eyes your lips, heart, and mind are clean.

In Christ, the Holy Spirit makes you a new creation who loves Him, trusts Him, and has His power to live a holy live. We are now His saints, a word that means 'holy ones.' This is a gift because of what Jesus has done for us.

Yet we are still in this world and our old sinful nature—our old Adam—still lives within us. It continues to urge us to give in to the devil, the world, and our old Adam. We often give in to them and bring evil into our lives. We often serve ourselves first, try to please friends and family, and try to fit into this fallen world, satisfying our desire to seek pleasure and comfort at all costs. While we are redeemed and our sins atoned for, we continue to sin.

The good news is God continues to pour out His grace on us even when we do not deserve it. Christ continues to send the Holy Spirit to us with our unclean lips with His forgiveness, atonement, and salvation. Through the Word and Sacrament God continues to pour out Christ's blood on us to continue to cover us and our unrighteousness. As we strive to live as the saints God created us to be, we are not alone. God the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, is always with us, as Jesus promises (*Matthew 28:20*). In Baptism, God made you His own. In the Lord's Supper, we receive strength for our journey as the crucified and resurrected body and blood of Christ Jesus—God and man—comes to our lips. When you're scared and say with Isaiah; "**Woe is me!**" for my sins are far too great and wonder if God can ever forgive you, you hear, in the voice of your pastor, God's pardon for every evil you have done when he says; “As a called and ordained servant of Christ, and by His authority, I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit!” your sins are truly forgiven and completely paid for. Even as we contemplate death, we have the same vision as Isaiah, St. John, and all the saints who have entered the heavenly temple before us.

In this underserved grace and salvation you can also say with Isaiah and the saints who have gone before us, "**Here am I! Send me! Send me!**" For you have the incredible gift from God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, on your lips and on your tongue, in your heart and in your mind. Christ Jesus has atoned for all your sins: You are completely forgiven! So, Go! Share the Good News of Christ which is within you! Go! You have been re-born of water and the Word. Go! You have the Triune God living within you and Holy Spirit working through you. Christ has touched and redeemed your lips and your life. He has also put His Gospel--the power of God for salvation in your mouth. Be who God has made you and allow the Holy Spirit to use your atoned lips to share the same healing and restoring message of 'Christ and Him crucified and resurrected for all people' with everyone around you! Go! Proclaim the good news that "**God so loved the world, that he gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through Him!**" Amen!!!

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