

DOING THE LORD'S WORK

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Lessons: Isaiah 6:1-8, Matthew 8:5-13, Arcana Coelestia 9296:2,3

(Keep in mind what it was like for Emanuel Swedenborg, who, like Isaiah, was willing to be a servant of the Lord. He served the Lord and us by recording all that he saw and heard for 27 years while visiting in the spiritual world.)

Isaiah was one of the greatest prophets of Israel. In the Word there is a whole book of the prophecies of Isaiah. They were so important that he was told to write them down. The prophecies served the people then. And they serve us also. For Isaiah told about the Lord coming into the world.

The Lord chose many kinds of people to be His prophets. He used great men and small, common people and noble people, rich men and poor men, city men and countrymen—it didn't matter what kind. He called, so long as that man loved the Lord, and was willing to serve Him.

Isaiah was a very powerful and rich man. He lived in Jerusalem. He knew and talked with kings. He was an important man. And he loved the Lord. He worshiped in the temple and was willing to serve.

One day, after his king died, Isaiah went to the temple. As he prayed, he saw a vision. He saw the Lord seated on a throne high above the court. His train filled the temple. Around Him were many winged angels. They looked like the cherubim on the ark. And they sang a song: "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord God of hosts; and His glory fills all the earth." Then the temple was filled with smoke, and the glory of the Lord. Isaiah was very humble and afraid. He said, "Woe is me. I have seen the Lord of hosts, and I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell amidst a people of unclean lips." And then a wonderful thing happened. One of the angels took a coal of fire from the altar and touched it to his lips. Then he said, "Now you are clean. Your sins are forgiven." Then he heard the voice of the Lord. The Lord said, "Who have I sent, and who will go for us?" Isaiah, full of love, answered, "Here am I. Send me." That was how Isaiah was chosen to be the great prophet of the Children of Israel. He served in Jerusalem and taught the king and many, many people. He showed them the evil things that they had been doing. He told them that they must stop, and follow the Lord.

This story is so special that it became part of the Word. It became part of the Word because it has something to tell each one of us. First, it shows that

Isaiah was an ordinary man, though a rich man. He helped the Lord. He went to the temple to worship, just as we do. But he was not a priest. He did not expect to see a vision or hear the voice of the Lord, just as we don't expect to see a vision. Yet he became very important to the Lord's Word. And we become very important when we do work for the Lord. Like Isaiah, we are not pure. We have all done evil. But we learn from this story that the Lord is willing to forgive if we turn to Him. He cleansed Isaiah, who said, "I am a man of unclean lips." Isaiah meant that he was not pure. He knew he had sinned. And the angel took a glowing coal from the great altar and touched his lips.

The fire on the altar burned from heaven. The Lord sent fire down from heaven to light the first fire that was built there. It represents a heavenly love that the Lord puts in our heart. The priests were not allowed to let the fire go out. It meant heavenly love for the Lord. We must all have love for the Lord in our hearts. We must keep it burning. Only love for the Lord can save us from evil. The angel took the coal of this altar and touched Isaiah's lips, so love for the Lord touches our lips and our hearts. It turns us away from evil. And then the Lord can forgive us, as He forgave Isaiah. Then we may hear the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom will I send?"

How can we hear the voice of the Lord? Exactly the way Isaiah did. He went to the temple. In worship to the Lord, he heard the Lord's voice. How do we hear the Lord's voice? We hear it in church. We hear it when we read His Word. The voice of the Lord is His Word. When we worship, and read or hear the Word, it's the Lord speaking to us. Part of what He says is, "Whom will I send?" It is the same as asking, "Who will do my work?" We must be like Isaiah, and say, "Here am I. Send me." For we must all love the Lord so much that we want to do what the Lord asks.

What does the Lord want us to do? What can we do for the Lord? Well, it may be a very great thing. It may be many small things. And when we serve Him, we must serve because we love Him. We may be asked only to help ready things for church. This is service to the Lord. He has called us to help in the work of His church. We serve the Lord when we keep His church clean and neat. Many work to make the church a place of worship.

And we serve the Lord when we learn recitations and say them in worship. So there are many ways, big and small, to serve Him. When we see a duty, we should remember that it is the Lord Who is calling us to it. We serve Him as Isaiah did, by doing our best. We find the happiness of service. We become a blessing others. And we receive a blessing from others when all work together. We show our love to the Lord and help to build His church. The Lord is with us when we serve. He gives us the happiness of use, and trains us for a place in heaven.