Isaiah's Story

Shalom. My name is Isaiah ben Amoz. My writings—the beginning of the Book of Isaiah—are now a part of sacred scripture. But I never imagined they would be. I simply had to write for love of the people. I wrote to bring good news in times of trouble, hope in times of despair, and faith in times of doubt.

You see, I lived about 800 years before Jesus' birth. At the time, my people were not living very faithfully. They were forgetting to care about God. It pained me to see many cared more about their own wealth than about justice. Some were obsessed with idols made of gold and silver. They feasted on the finest bread and drank wine by the bowl, even as widows and orphans were left hungry and foreigners living among us were oppressed.

We forgot that we once lived as foreigners in the land of Egypt, where we had prayed to God for freedom and justice. Now, we were the oppressors. My people thought they were faithful because they maintained beautiful temples, offered burnt sacrifices, and lit incense. But without love and justice, those actions were a sham.

The faithlessness of my people broke my heart. I have wept for the love of my people many a night.

In my frustration and sorrow, God purified my soul. When God asked, Whom shall I send to speak my truth? I said, here I am. Send me and I will keep the people in my heart. And God gave me the courage to speak, the poetry to express, and the oracles to warn the people.

I tried to tell them that we were sowing the seeds of destruction when we disobeyed God's commandments, and when we cared about no one else but ourselves. I tried to teach that being faithful means taking care of the least advantaged in the society.

Unfortunately, I did not witness how God eventually redeemed my people. God, however, chose two other writers to continue to write what I had begun. One wrote about my nation, having lost a war, living as exiles in a foreign land. The other wrote after our return.

My message to you is this. Please abide in God's radical love. Our God truly cares about all people, and about justice. Engage in a process of reflection, confession, and repentance. God will forgive, and God's love will surround you and redeem you. The Holy God will never abandon you. Thanks be to God.

Unwrapping Isaiah's Story

Isaiah and the other prophets teach us that we need to love as God loves. Who does God love? Is there anyone God does not love? Is there anything God does not care about?

ACTIVITY 1: My Picture: Here I Am, Lord

Ages
All

Supplies
Voices United

Optional: computer with Internet access

Colouring supplies

Blank paper

Activity
- Sing, or read, "I, the Lord of Sea and Sky" (*Voices United* 509). This song was inspired in part by Isaiah.
- If you have Internet access, you could also listen to this song online. Search YouTube and choose a favourite version.
- On a blank sheet of paper, write (or get someone to write for you) a line or phrase that speaks to you.
- Now, draw a picture inspired by that line/phrase.

ACTIVITY 2: My Prayer: A Prophetic Voice

Ages
6+

Supplies
Writing supplies

Activity
- Name an issue in your community, province, or country that makes you sad. Describe it in a grieving tone. (If you feel like it, use poetic words!)
- Now consider, what might God say to comfort the people? What might provide hope?
- Write a short prayer in response.

ACTIVITY 3: My Action: Purifying My Heart

Ages
12+

Discussion
Isaiah has a mystical vision of being purified by God. An angel touches his mouth with a hot piece of coal and says, "Now that this has touched your lips, your guilt has departed and your sin is blotted out." Then he hears the voice of the Lord asking, "Whom shall I send?" And he answers, "Here am I; send me!" (Isaiah 6:6–9)

- What would you be able to do if you had your slate wiped clean, with no worries, fears, or concerns to hold you back?

- What is something you could do this week?

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