**Our Holy Lord Atones for Unclean Lips**

by Rev. James H. DeLoach

Zion Lutheran Church and School

*In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple.****2****Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew.****3****And one called to another and said:*

*“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts;
the whole earth is full of his glory!”*

***4****And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke.****5****And I 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!”* ***6****Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a burning coal that he had taken with tongs from the altar.****7****And he touched my mouth and said: “Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for.” (Isaiah 6:1-7)*

God is holy. We are not. The Lord’s glory exposes our loss of the image of God. God’s holiness exposes us for what we are: by nature, sinful and unclean; sinful in thought, word, and deed. Isaiah 6:1-7 illustrates this reality.

 Through a vision the Prophet Isaiah entered the presence of God’s heavenly council. Our Lord, who rules heaven and earth, sat upon a throne, his robe filling the temple, and surrounded by six-winged seraphim, who called to one another responsively: *“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts (sabaoth or armies); the whole earth is full of his glory!”* The foundations of the temple thresholds shook and the hall was filled with the smoke of incense upon the hot coals, which were brought into the temple on the Day of Atonement.

 Isaiah acknowledges his sinfulness, *“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!”* Sinner Isaiah should be consumed by the glory of his holy God. But God is merciful. He sends a seraph, who forgives Isaiah by touching his mouth with the burning coal connected with God’s holy word: *“your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for.”*

 Each Lord’s Day we sinners enter God’s house where he serves us in the Divine Service. Like Isaiah our lips are unclean from the shameful words we have spoken—the crude, careless**,** loveless, bickering, grumbling, jealous, selfish, ungrateful words to our spouse, parents, and family, or about our superiors, co-workers, or fellow saints. We, too, confess our sins and admit that we deserve nothing but God’s temporal and eternal punishment.

 But God has mercy on us for the sake of our Savior, Jesus Christ, who poured out his blood in his death on the cross to purify us and atone for all our sins. He has risen from the dead to be present among us and speak his word of forgiveness into our ears. His robe of righteousness covers our sins via his word connected to water in Holy Baptism. He touches our lips, not with a burning coal, but with his holy body and blood under bread and wine, where we sing the *Sanctus* with angels, archangels, and all the company of heaven: “*Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Sabaoth!*” We then depart with holy lips and lives liberated for faith in God and love to our neighbor.