

Series: Get in the Game
“Finding God after a Gut Punch”
Rev. Dr. Raphael G. Warnock
September 11, 2022
Isaiah 6:1-8

Sermon Notes

Continuing in the series, Get in the Game, Pastor Warnock introduces this week’s sermon title with a reference to the classic sport of boxing. During an interview of Mike Tyson, he was asked what his fight plan was before facing his opponents. Tyson responds, “Everyone has a plan until they get punched in the mouth.” We all have a plan, until we get knocked down, punched in the gut. Life is filled with gut punches, hits that land so hard, we are left debilitated beyond words, devastated beyond imagination. Such a gut punch landed on the hearts of Americans 21 years ago when multiple airplanes were flown directly into the Twin Towers in New York, the Pentagon, and in Virginia by foreign terrorists who tried to break the spirit and strength of the United States who was thought to be impermeable to such violent attacks.

We have all received scary news and bad news: divorce, losing a spouse, sibling, and even a child. These gut punches knock the wind out of you. How can someone get back in the game of life after enduring such tragedy? Isaiah illustrates for us what it is like to experience loss and trying to figure out how to continue on. It doesn’t matter how prestigious a position we hold, all gut punches leave us devastated and wounded. Queen Elizabeth and Sister Mary Gurley were two giants in their own rights for their communities and now those communities are mourning the loss of these amazing women and leaders. King Uzziah was a significant King in his day, and when he died, the Northern Kingdom was in mourning. Isaiah sought refuge and comfort in the temple. While Isaiah was able to see things that others could not, it wasn’t until he experienced the loss of his mentor, that he saw God for who God was. Our brokenness allows us to see God in a profound and life changing way. Isaiah was so focused on King Uzziah that he couldn’t see God until King Uzziah was out of the picture. Even when all hope seems lost, we can begin again, live again, and win again with God high and lifted up in our lives.

1. **Exalt the Savior.** Live your life with utmost recognition that God is God alone. Don’t exalt material things, people, or positions. When Isaiah saw God, He was high and lifted up. Perhaps Isaiah could not see things in their proper positions before King Uzziah died. King Uzziah was a good leader and accomplished much in his life but be careful to remain humble. Don’t believe your own hype, your own press. Uzziah began to mishandle the holy items in the Temple because of his arrogance and broke out in leprosy. No matter how good you look on the outside, you have some issues on the inside, we are not perfect. We did not achieve and receive the blessings in our lives on our own. Acknowledge God in all your ways!
2. **Examine yourself:** After seeing God with the right perspective, Isaiah then looked inward. He said, “Woe is me”, “I’m a man of unclean lips”. Look at your shortcomings, imperfections, the log in your own eye. We are undone, a work in progress, and under construction. God’s will for our lives is for us to prosper-we look better in the future. After persevering through the fires in life, we will come through as pure gold.
3. **Embrace your new season:** Allow God to cleanse you as the Seraphim did with Isaiah, touching his lips with hot coals. What may feel like a punch in the gut, may just be a touch from God: to lift you up, knock the sense, not out of you, but into you. What you see as a setback, might be a set up for the next level. God can take the punch and put you where you are supposed to be. Embrace the new possibilities and new hope in your new season. When God needed a messenger, Isaiah was ready and said, “Here am I, send me!” Through Isaiah’s pain, he emerges as one of the most prolific prophets in the Old Testament.

Reflection Questions

1. What you think is the whole program is just the prelude. God has more in store for us. What new chapters is God trying to write with you?
2. After the enemy gives us his best shot, we can come back with a vengeance. How do you lean on God like Ali leaned on the ropes?
3. What is it in your life that is blocking you from seeing what God is trying to do in your life? What are you exalting above God?
4. How do you deal with change?
5. How do you view God when experiencing the trauma of transitioning from one place/phase in life to another? Do you think God is punishing people or helping them get to the next level and phase of their purpose in life?