

DISCOVER HOLINESS

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November 1, 2015

Sermon in a sentence: Our greatest privilege and highest honour is to live a holy life, demonstrating to all who interact with us that we are set apart to God.

Congregational reading: 1 Peter 1:10-16 NKJV

Scriptures: 1 Pet. 1:10-16; Rom. 12:1-2; 1 Cor. 6:19-20; 1 Cor. 3:17b; 1 Pet. 3:3-4; Eph. 4:25-29

1 Peter 1:10-16 NKJV Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace *that would come* to you, ¹¹ searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. ¹² To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things which angels desire to look into. ¹³ Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest *your* hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; ¹⁴ as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, *as* in your ignorance; ¹⁵ but as He who called you *is* holy, you also be holy in all *your* conduct, ¹⁶ because it is written, “*Be holy, for I am holy.*”

I give great honour to all of you who are here in the house of the Lord today. The vast majority of you have come to church as a deliberate, heartfelt act of worship; you have come to worship “... the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:13).

In spite of the fact that we live in an increasingly secular world that seeks to discount, diminish and even ridicule the word of God and the people of God, you are here, joining with the songwriter who said: *“Oh come let us adore Him, Christ the Lord.”*

We stand in the presence of our God whom we have proven to be holy; righteous; omnipotent; gracious; loving and kind.

In turn, we give our praise, worship, service and love to Him whom we seek to honour in every way possible.

There are many who do not know God as we have been privileged to know Him, and our great purpose on Earth, as His children, church and bride, is to make Him known to as many people as possible.

One of the key ways in which we make Him known is by the way we live. People around us observe our lives, and based upon their observations, they ask questions about our lifestyle (if it is different from theirs). And certainly, it should be.

Those who know us should be able to describe our lives as Holy. God-like. Grace-filled. Attractive. Winsome. Joyful. Loving. Giving.

Whoever sees us should see the image of God in us, and His glory and holiness should always be on display.

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But what exactly does it mean to be “holy”? It means a person, place or thing has been dedicated and consecrated to God or a religious purpose.

Going back to OT times, certain people, places or things were described as being 'holy unto the Lord'.

The Ark of the Covenant: When God met with Moses on Mt. Sinai, He gave him the plan for a tangible, physical symbol of His presence among His people: a rectangular wooden box, roughly 4' x 2' x 2', overlaid with gold. God's covenant with Israel, the tablets of stone containing the Ten Commandments were placed inside the box before the cover was attached. Then on top of the box, another amazing component – the Mercy Seat – the final piece, bringing together all the aspects of God's holiness: His law, His purity, His justice, His judgment, His mercy and His grace. The Ark represented all of God's holiness, His love and His provision for His people.

The city of Jerusalem: The psalmist wrote:

Psa. 48:1-2,8 KJV Great *is* the LORD, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, *in* the mountain of his holiness. ² Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, *is* mount Zion, *on* the sides of the north, the city of the great King. 8 As we have heard, so have we seen in the city of the LORD of hosts, in the city of our God: God will establish it forever. Selah.

Throughout Israeli history, the city of Jerusalem has had a preeminent place in the hearts of the Jews. Of course, the first Christians were Jews and the reverence for the "Holy City" continued. It is the city where our Lord gave His life as a ransom for our sins and the city where He began to "pour out His Spirit upon all flesh". It is the city to which Jesus will return, and Jerusalem is the name of the city that will descend from heaven as part of the new heaven and the new Earth. Whenever we think of Jerusalem, we think of the holy God who inhabits its walls. It is the most

important and prominent geographical location on Earth that represents the presence and holiness of God.

The people of God: God sent a message to Israel through Moses as they gathered at the base of Mt. Sinai, just three months after He had delivered them from Egypt. He said:

Ex. 19:6 “ ‘... you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation’. These *are* the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel.”

It was God’s intention for Israel that they would be seen as the human embodiment of His love for humanity and His undiluted holiness.

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In his letter to the Ephesians, the apostle Paul gave us a good understanding of the place and position of the Church under the new covenant:

Eph. 5:25-27 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, ²⁶ that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, ²⁷ that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.

What an honour and privilege! The Church of Jesus Christ is ordained to be the visible human manifestation of God’s holiness in the Earth.

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We, the Church of Jesus Christ demonstrate holiness to the world around us in three main ways (and normally in this order): how we look, how we speak and how we act.

These are matters that deal with the condition of our heart and spirit, which then motivate our external physical manifestations of holiness. **Obedience and submission to the word of God, intertwined with godly wisdom and understanding is the foundation for our life of holiness, both inwardly and outwardly.**

God desires, requires and demands holiness from those who are His own. It is simply a reflection of who He is, His character, His divine nature, and His ownership of all humanity (having *redeemed* us at Calvary). So, the apostle Peter states:

1 Pet. 1:15-16 ... as He who called you *is* holy, you also be holy in all *your* conduct, ¹⁶ because it is written, "*Be holy, for I am holy.*"

The apostle Paul also sees this as appropriate behaviour for the redeemed in these verses we often quote:

Rom. 12:1-2 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, *which is* your reasonable service. ² And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

When we respond to God and appropriate His salvation to ourselves, He fills us with His Spirit, which is properly called His "Holy" Spirit.

Holiness is integral to God's *being*, and it should be integral to our being!

When He fills us with His Spirit, we become His temples; dwelling places; worship centres of the Holy Spirit. Our lives should be filled with worship to God, inspiring others also to worship Him.

1 Cor. 6:19-20 ... do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit *who is* in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? ²⁰ For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.

1 Cor. 3:17b For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are.

The way we look should be a demonstration of our holiness.

This is a very simple concept. When we get ready to face the world every morning, what message do we desire to send to those we encounter? What 'face' do we put on? Is it a face that says "I value you as my fellowman, made in the image and likeness of God?" Or does it say "get out of my sight before I rip you to pieces?" We can be as angry as humanly possible and yet put forward a face that says: "I am extremely agitated and upset, but I do not despise you as a human being."

What message do we send through our personal grooming, clothing, hair, make-up, jewelry, perfume, etc.? Is there something inside that says: "Today I want to be the most honourable ambassador and representative of Jesus Christ I can possibly be", or is there another motive?

Whether male or female, we know we can present ourselves in a manner that is dignified, modest and attractive, that does not call undue attention to ourselves.

Or we can dress to be provocative, sexy and alluring, sending out the message: “Hey, look at ME!” When *we* become the centre of attention, Christ becomes invisible and we are not exhibiting holiness in the way we look.

So, the apostle Peter states:

1 Peter 3:3-4 Do not let your adornment be *merely* outward—arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on *fine* apparel— ⁴ rather *let it be* the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible *beauty* of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God.

Without anyone having to judge us, we must allow the voice of the Holy Spirit to tell us what pleases Him and brings glory to Him in the way we look. Both facially and sartorially.

The way we *speak* should be a demonstration of our holiness.

Jesus said:

Luke 6:45 A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.

The way we speak is a sure indicator of the level of holiness and God-likeness inside us. Paul states:

Eph. 4:25,29 ... putting away lying, “*Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor,*” for we are members of one another. ²⁹ Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.

The speech test is also very simple to administer. We simply ask the question: "Would Jesus say what I am about to say? With the same tone and volume I am about to use?" If the answer is yes, speak on. If the answer is no, don't say it! Unholy speech is just another attempt by the enemy of our soul to diminish our holiness and separation unto God.

The way we act should be a demonstration of our holiness.

"WWJD?" This question applies to the way (or the ways) in which we act. "What would Jesus do?" Can we envision Jesus acting in precisely the way we are about to act? Let us hear what the word of God has to say:

Eph. 4:26-28 "Be angry, and do not sin": do not let the sun go down on your wrath,²⁷ nor give place to the devil. ²⁸ Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need.

Every act should be a holy act. If we are planning to steal, lash out in anger, perform an immoral act, get into a fight or throw a frying pan, we know these are not holy acts. STOP!

We need to look as Jesus would look. Speak as Jesus would speak. Act as Jesus would act. "Be holy," He says, "for I am holy."

Amen.