

I Peter 1:13-16 “Becoming Holy”

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[0 : 00] I want to add my excitement to what Kelly said.

I'm really excited about the Express Grace conference this weekend. Just want to remind you, if you show up next Sunday, that's great and we're glad you're here. You'll have missed half of it already.

Okay. The first two sessions are Saturday morning and Saturday night. Don't miss the chance to serve together, to deepen relationships with our partners, to learn from Ben, who is a pastor and personal friend of mine.

For many years now, I've learned so much from him. So sign up, but more importantly, show up and enjoy that annual conference.

We're going to get back soon to our study of John's gospel and finish that up. But this morning, as we've been saying, is part two of two, a little mini series on why we are here through the lens of holiness.

[1 : 09] Last week, in case you weren't here, everybody who was here remembers all of this, of course, we heard God tell us that you are holy. Already set apart because you were made by God to be his and you were redeemed by God to be his through the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross.

Before you do anything holy. I've talked with many of you this week and we've had a lot of the same reactions to that, feeling the weight of that reality because we often feel that ourselves were just not holy.

That's our experience of ourselves. And we've felt some joy in that reality that it's inspiring us to consider that God is working in me, his glory in my life because he's made me, he's made us a tabernacle for himself.

We're set apart for God completely. That's who we are. That's why we're here to be his. But there's another aspect of holiness that we're still becoming as God keeps working in us, right?

The finished work of Christ on the cross we love and also the continued work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts. I told you we were going to pick up where we left off last week with this quote from Dr.

[2 : 51] Martin Lloyd-Jones. Holiness is not something we are called upon to do in order that we may become something.

It is something we are to do because of what we already are. Becoming holy is the process of that heavenly reality about who we are.

Holy, whether you act like it or not. That reality becoming the way we actually live here on earth.

That we do act like it. Act like we are gods. Let's live our lives for him, all for Jesus. It's something we do because of what we already are.

Or you could say it's becoming who you were born to be. You may recognize that phrase or that theme from numerous famous stories.

[3 : 56] It's a very common theme of someone who is born to be king but being slow to take up that mantle. Preferring for a time to live for himself rather than to step into that role that's rightfully his.

You may think when I say that of Tolkien's hooded ranger strider who lurks in the shadows until the race of man needs him most.

You may think of Twain's prince and the pauper where Prince Edward thinks that he'd rather switch places with poor Tom Canty. And get away from palace life forever.

Or probably even more of you think of Disney's Simba, right? Who runs away to a life famously free from worry.

No responsibilities. Until he remembers that he was made for more than that. All of them undergo a transformation that makes them eventually into the king that they were born to be.

[5 : 11] They were the rightful king. No doubt about it. Whether they acted like it or not, they were the king. But finally, they each became who they were born to be.

To their own fulfillment and to the blessing of many, many others. This morning, this year even, I want us to see ourselves in that light.

God has made us for himself. God is remaking us for his purpose. So, how will we live for his glory? And along the way as we do that, yes, it will bring glory to him. But along the way, we'll find ourselves fulfilled and becoming who we were really born to be. And we'll find many others blessed by our lives with God.

How will that happen? That's what happens as we become holy. One last clarification before we read our passage for today.

[6 : 19] Become who you are means that grace and holiness are related in the right order. Some of you think that you go to a grace church and you must be lost this morning.

Because we've said the word holy so many times. Two weeks in a row, Will keeps talking about our holiness. Where am I? Listen, it's important for us to understand that God's grace is not in competition with our holiness.

And in fact, it inspires our holiness. It makes holy lives possible because he has come to live within us. And that's the only way that we can have anything to do with holiness.

Holiness is Christ in me. I want to show you some images I've used before just to make sure we're on the same page. Some people think that this is the picture of Christianity.

Christianity. But it's not. The Bible does not call us to live holy enough lives that we can make our way up the stairway to heaven and a holy God and his eternal salvation being holy with him forever.

[7 : 41] No. There is a connection between grace and holiness in biblical Christianity. But it's the other way around.

Grace comes first. The holy God comes down from heaven to us to make us holy.

Holy. The amazing grace of that movement of his, his condescension to us, changes the way I live now because now I'm his and he's with me.

I'm holy. So if you listen this morning as we talk and what you think is, you know, I need to be holy. More holy. Good.

Good. Good. But don't think that the solution then is, I need to live better. No, the solution is, I need Jesus.

[8 : 38] I need him to show up in my life and make me holy. We're going to see here in 1 Peter how those heavenly realities and this holy God transform our earthly lives so that we actually live and love and long for different things.

1 Peter chapter 1, a letter written to help the people of God who are living in this world amidst suffering and opposition and struggle to live with an eternal perspective because of who God is and what he's done for us.

He's just been talking about those amazing realities and now we pick up the reading at verse 13.

Therefore, in light of this glorious hope God has called you to, preparing your minds for action and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct.

Since it is written, you shall be holy for I am holy. This is God's holy word. Let's ask for his help.

Father, we give you thanks that you, the one who is holy, holy, holy, would meet with us about holiness, would even desire to come to us and make us holy.

[10 : 25] And we're well aware that that requires you to make something about us different. And so we do honestly open our hearts to you and say, come and transform us, change us.

You can do that and we need you to by your spirit, through your word, even now. In Jesus' name, amen. Amen. So what does this look like as we become who we were born to be, holy to God?

Peter highlights two things. This is pretty common in the Bible, the negative and the positive, right? Often they're together. First, this looks like a life shaped less by my priorities without God.

Look at verse 14. Do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance.

This is the first side of the coin, the negative side, right? If being holy is being set apart, this is what we as God's children are set apart from.

[11 : 39] And no more hiding in the shadows, no more disguising as a commoner, no more rolling around in the dirt with warthogs, right? You have to leave that life behind to become who you are.

You can watch this pattern continue through the New Testament, 2 Timothy chapter 2. Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from what is dishonorable, he'll be a vessel for honorable use set apart as holy, useful to the master of the house, ready for every good work.

So flee youthful passions, right? Same idea. Flee youthful passions. Paul tells the Corinthians especially to flee, in particular, sexual immorality.

Why? Why? Just because it's a bad idea? Well, specifically because they are holy. Their body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, so they are not their own.

I would tell you that's one of the most countercultural things that the Bible says anywhere to 21st century people. You are not your own. Is that possible?

[12 : 55] How's that? You were bought with a price. As a result of that, glorify God with your body.

Be holy to Him. Live in a holy way. All these passages are describing what the Bible calls repentance. When Jesus comes to us and we say yes to Jesus, as a result of that, we say no to other things.

Other things that claim to offer life. When He says, I am life. Knowing me is life. So we turn from those things back to Him.

Or another theology word for this, mortification. Putting to death. Whatever keeps us from being completely holy to God.

Set apart for Him. And all of life. It has to go. And now you're thinking, there He goes. I knew it. This is what it was all going to come down to. It's the list of things to avoid in order to be holy.

[14 : 00] Don't drink. Don't smoke. Don't chew. Don't go with girls who do. Just avoid them all and you'll be good. I knew He was going to get to that. If that's what you're thinking, what's vital to notice here is what Peter says we turn from.

Or put to death. What is it that's over here that I keep talking about we need to repent from? He says, the passions of your former ignorance.

That's what He's calling us to turn from. It's not just stuff we do. The passions. The desires beneath the sins. See, He's saying, now that you are holy to God, life is found in Him.

Stop living as though life is found somewhere else. Stop being molded, shaped, impacted by the things that you used to think would satisfy or fulfill you.

In my words, these are what my priorities are when God is not in the picture. Where am I going to find myself filled up? Where am I going to find significance and satisfaction?

[15 : 10] A young man said to me not long ago, I finally realize I've been looking for my girlfriend to do for me what only God can.

Make me valuable and satisfied. I thought, man, that is really mature. Because when I was in high school, as this young man was, and never had a girlfriend, by the way, as you suspected, I, that was not that funny.

Phew. I'm not going to use that one again. I often thought, and this is sincere, not a joke, I thought if I could just get the right girl to fall in love with me, I'd be set.

I mean, life would be perfect when I actually knew or said I did that only God could satisfy me.

Right? That's living in ignorant passions. Of course, relationships can also involve immoral behavior.

[16 : 28] When our youthful passions convince us that we need whatever we want in order to be happy. And listen, we are naturally self-focused, right?

That's the way we're born. And then voices all around us are saying to us, if it feels good, do it.

That's what you need. Listen, don't say you're holy to God, living for His purposes, but then reject His plan and say that your plan for being fulfilled is better.

I mean, God's goal is all for Jesus, but my way. Right? I'll do it the way I want. I mean, God's the creator king, but my plan for sexuality is clearly better than His.

What? No. No. No. No. Don't live conformed to those passions of your thinking as though your way was better. Y'all, even when relationships are good and right, no spouse or significant other can fulfill you like God.

Don't live like they could. Don't be shaped by that longing, Peter says. It's not that easy. Some of us are looking for that in other places, like in retirement and the comfort and ease and peace and quiet.

[17 : 51] Won't that be nice? That promises to satisfy us. but if what you mean by retirement is living for yourself doing whatever you good and well please every moment of every day God doesn't know anything of that word it's just not there God says you are holy to me and you will always be that won't ever stop don't set your hope on retirement look the best is yet to come it's even better than that a future full of grace when Jesus Christ is revealed that's what you've got to look forward to set your hope fully there see when we wrongly believed that this world was all there was our passions made us want not just retirement but in the meantime more stuff right can you even remember that day when you when you wanted more things when you know you can't oh good sometimes we believe that and our passions are for that and maybe the outward sin was stealing from a store to get more stuff it could have been stealing from the nation by cheating on your taxes it could have been stealing from your employer by cheating on your expense reports but Peter says don't repent only from that that's not where he's focused he says repent from looking to possessions to satisfy you to thinking stuff would be enough repent from from lusting and coveting and and being greedy because you didn't embrace that that your father owns it all and gives you exactly what you need repent from believing that you needed more some of us have tried that with popularity if I could just fit in and and get along with that group of people that would do it for me and and we found as one young person said to me recently sometimes friends are the worst remember people can be good friends we need good friends but they're still terrible gods there is one faithful God who will always let you in who will never let you down he's the one you need some of us have lied about our co-workers to get ahead we've run others down to get power or control we've neglected our neighbors in an effort to to be at the top of the food chain and find life there as

DJ was saying before he sang and having control and and power Peter says don't let your life be shaped that way you know better now you don't need to be in control to be valuable you don't you were made for more to be gods that's several ideas I'd like each of us just to think of one could you could you do that focus on one passion and even just right now as you think that should shape my life less than it does don't stop at the outward action that you should quit to be more holy what's the desire beneath that sin that you can see even right now it's part of your former ignorance something you know won't actually be where life is something distracting you from being holy to God will you start talking to

Jesus about that even this afternoon repenting of it rejecting its lies that's the negative part of becoming holy turning from the unholy that's where Peter starts but but it's not where he stops leaving that life behind leaving the shadows and the warthogs and the common life behind is not all that's needed to become who you were born to be if our heroes are going to become the kings that they rightly are in these stories they will need to lead men into battle against evil right they'll need to step into the roles of decision making for the country they will need to fight the hyenas so that the pride is protected there's good work that needs to be done these kings have weighty responsibilities on them and the king of kings has given the same to you he's opened even even greater vistas than these of of wonderful life before his sons and daughters that he's invited into this relationship with him Peter states the call to holiness positively verse 15 as he who called you is holy you also be holy in all your conduct be holy be set apart for God not just in theory not just because he says it's true that he made you that way but in your conduct becoming who you were born to be means a life shaped more by God's priorities with me what God wants and what could happen if he's really present with me do you believe that if he's really powerfully at work in me and through me what could life look like well pursue righteousness faith love and peace do you read those do you think these could mark my life he said yes he said yes that's what I've made you for glorify God with your body you're his right see this is the positive half of repentance you don't merely turn from your sin but to God and life with him something is new and different this is what the theologians call vivification bringing to life the fruits of the spirit of God dwelling in you you God's holy temple now there's new life in you and it looks different there's different fruit growing on that tree if you turn from those old desires and needs you'll find you've got time and space for new ones I've found that a lot of times what else could I possibly do I've got all my times accounted for I bet some of your times accounted for by passions of your former ignorance and this is going to open up new opportunities God comes to us in his grace he sets us apart for himself and he transforms us in every way this is a total transformation from the inside out right as our desires are now for things that he loves as our confidence today and tomorrow is in his constant empowerment that our hope is in his eternal glory freeing us up now in these days to live wholly for God's kingdom to come here

instead of living for ourselves see heaven comes down to earth in that image heaven comes down to us Peter says we have a certain future a faithful father a purchased freedom so now we can have fun becoming holy in our lives see holiness is an exciting adventure just in case you're confused it includes more than singing songs and listening to sermons in church okay that that's part of it but it goes outside of these walls it has to it means all that you are is consecrated to God isn't that right verse 15 again just checking be holy in all your conduct unless you're staying here all week it's got to go out here beyond these walls so now for example have some fun my money it's not something that I have to find life in anymore so it becomes kingdom ammunition to blow a hole in the gates of hell with right I listened this week to some amazing people gathered to talk about holistic systems that that could be developed around here to to rescue and to love victims of human trafficking these were experts from across the country seeing it happen in different states and they're talking about all sorts of things you know why they were gathered here because some people with money wanted to put those resources to holy use for God's kingdom they wanted to know how best to love these particular downtrodden image bearers of God with their resources and they were having fun doing it I told you last week I've been wrestling with my time being God's as I've prayed this week he's especially shown me an opportunity with my margin my downtime one of the things that happens some of you've experienced my kids have gotten older all of a sudden there are times there are these windows of time in the evening where everybody else in my family is busy and nobody's wanting to hang out with me that's weird it's great isn't it my time grab it wherever you can right some some me time but God has been reminding me that all of my time is his and in fact I've got an eternity of time that's not going to run out time's not this this thing that's so limited anymore I've got I've got eternity and so rather than making a list of all the things I want to do and just chasing after him so fast he's telling me

[28 : 35] I can slow down and be with Jesus it it is his time after all I'll be honest with you I'm still learning how best to do that it is really hard for me to sit still some of you know what that feels like but it's exciting to to be with him that when I do slow down I'm not alone he's with me and I can spend time with him your money your time what about your relationships they become kingdom opportunities don't they whether you're talking about the neighbors that God has placed you in relationship with like several of us were this week some some new neighbors at a retirement community we're figuring out how how those relationships can be engaged for holy purposes maybe you're considering your kids or your friends or your family that you just can't get along with well what might God do if he was working in you if he was working through you in those relationships I don't know but don't give up hope there think creatively and have fun how might that relationship be used for his glory what new relationship might God call you into for his glory just throw out one more idea for positive holiness as you're thinking and dreaming and exploring all of these conversations that I had by the way were just this week can you imagine if all of us in this room being set apart for God that God would would see come to life in holy people set apart for himself some incredible things I don't know what all he might do

Christy and I revisited this week an old conversation about our home being a kingdom outpost it's not my house it's God's house I'm just living in it if every part of my life is holy to him it's his what does it look like then to use it as a place for rest for refreshment for refuge for others maybe you don't usually think of life-giving parties and strategic financial investments and neighborhood hospitality as holy living they sound like too much fun but I hope if you don't that God is expanding your horizons right now we did sing all for Jesus didn't we all of it all we are all we have listen I'm gonna stop coming up with ideas because y'all are way more creative than I am I love that about this church I couldn't even think up these things if y'all weren't already doing them and I just say oh that looks fun look what God's doing over there what's he gonna do for you he's he's setting you free I want you to feel this and know this when we talk about being holy God's not trying to to button you up in this command to holiness he's not saying to you just don't mess up make sure you don't get out of line no he's trying actually to set you free to live for him everywhere in all sorts of good works that he the most creative one of us all has prepared in advance for you to walk in for you to walk in those good works as he walks with you as you you together get the the evil forces of darkness on the run you get life flourishing everywhere around you it's King Simba coming back to pride rock and and relationships blossom and and the vulnerable are protected and and predatory leaders are chased away and everyone rejoices that's what God's freeing you up for it's really exciting because as you start turning from your sin and turning to God moment by moment

as you start seeing all of life as this this playground it's God's playground that he's made for me you'll start to feel that this is what you were made for I don't know what the the this specifically will look like for you but but it doesn't have to be flashy and grab headlines it may be very quiet and involve a lot of listening it may be time-consuming and require a lot of sacrifice but whatever it is you'll never be alone in it I want to end where we started with this God who comes to live with us to make us holy see God doesn't come looking for holy people right this is one of the beautiful things about how gracious and glorious he is he doesn't have to look for holy people because when he shows up in people's hearts and lives the most unholy people become holy don't they and even with all the exciting things you'll get to do seeing Satan fall seeing hurting people healed seeing dead people come to life the most exciting part of all of it is being his being in relationship with him as you go about it all see God is so gracious that he doesn't give demands to be burdensome to us become who you are is not a finger wagging demand for you to perform live up to what you should you've carried that burden before no with God it's an open-handed invitation into the wonderful reality of relationship with God come come become who you are become who I made you to be come be in relationship with the holy holy holy God so it is absolutely a product of grace which means it's more about abiding with him than it is about achieving for him listen it is not up to you to make yourself holy your holiness even this week doesn't rest on your choices your efforts or your success it rests on your father and so must you

God makes us holy as our catechism says as a work of his free grace I hope that gives you joy and freedom I want you to listen to this verse in Hebrews 10 it's about the sacrifice of Jesus so you can leave with this kind of hope and confidence by a single offering he has perfected for all time just just stop there he has made perfect for all time you are holy right who who is who's perfect already for all time those who are being made holy those who are still in process that is a divine passive voice which you don't need to know other than you need to know that it means you are being made holy by the holy God that's who's doing the work being his having eternal security having a heavenly homeland and family it motivates us and it sets us apart to become holy in our lives every day right here and right now in every way you can think of

Southwood you are holy you were made for holiness become who you were born to be let's pray oh father what a delight that we can come to you and know that you've promised to make us into what you've called us to you made us in the first place and you've promised you won't stop working on us till you finish the good work you've begun at the day of Christ Jesus what hope that gives us what excitement would you turn us loose on our families and our neighbors and this city for the glory of King Jesus thank you for making us holy please don't stop even when it hurts even when we struggle against it call our hearts back again to you we need your help and ask for it in Jesus name amen for more information visit us online at southwood.org you