

God is Holy

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Date: 10 May 2020

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[0 : 00] Today I've entitled this sermon that God is holy. Is there any other word that is more descriptive of God than holy?

The great Puritan preacher Stephen Charnock wrote, Power is God's hand or arm. Omniscience his eye.

Mercy his bowels. Eternity his duration. But holiness is his beauty. In fact, when we look at the Bible to help us define holiness, we see that God himself singles out this perfection.

Psalm 89.35. Psalmist writes, Once for all I have sworn by my holiness. Psalm 30 verse 4 says, Sing praises to the Lord, O you his saints, and give thanks for his holy name.

Psalm 71.22. I will also praise you with the harp for your faithfulness, O my God. I will sing praises to you with the lyre, O holy one of Israel.

[1 : 29] Psalm 89.18. For our shield belongs to the Lord, our King, to the Holy One of Israel.

And Psalm 99.9. Exalt the Lord our God and worship at his holy mountain. For the Lord our God is holy.

Have you ever tried to define holiness? Well, Charles Hodge, an earlier Christian writer, wrote, The holiness of God is not to be conceived as one attribute among others.

It is rather a general term representing the conception of God's consummate perfection and total glory.

It is his infinite moral perfection crowning his infinite intelligence and power. Thomas Watson wrote, Holiness is the most sparkling jewel on God's crown.

[2 : 37] It is the name by which he is known. And R.L. Dabney wrote, Holiness is to be regarded not as a distinct attribute, but as the result of all God's moral perfection together.

Of all the attribute of God, It is the one attribute that is declared around the throne of God day and night.

Holy, holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty. Holy, holy, holy, holy, holy, holy, holy, holy, holy, holy.

The angels do not cry, mercy, mercy, mercy, or love, love, love, or justice, justice, justice.

They cry, holy, holy, holy, holy, holy, holy. To think of God is to think of his holiness.

[3 : 44] Of all his attributes, it is the one that is most often used to single out God more than any other attribute. It is the most prominent.

It is the one that receives the most fanfare. Today, I want us to look at God's holiness from three different perspectives.

And I really want us to not only come to a greater sense of worship through this understanding, but I want to correct some errors that exist within our faulty understanding of holiness.

I know a couple weeks ago in one of my earlier sermons while we were in Ephesians, I kind of talked a little bit about this. And today, I'm just going to blow it up just a little bit more.

But I want us to see how holiness talks about God's separateness. How God is so much separate from us. I want to talk about God's holiness as demonstrated by how magnificent he is.

[4 : 48] And the third element I want to talk about with holy is his purity. So I want to talk about how separate he is, how magnificent he is, and how pure he is, and how the Bible uses the word holiness and holy to convey those three ideas.

The first fact we need to understand is God is the most holy being in the universe. Scripture makes that as clear as day. He is unparalleled in holiness.

He is unequalled. He is without pure. And what's weird when we start to try to use words to compare God to or use to describe him, the word holy in its essence means that God is incomparable.

There's no word that can actually aptly describe him. There is no comparison that can be made that would truly render a great comparison.

Listen, when we speak about holiness, it is often used in the wrong way. And I've talked about this earlier. We tend to think of it as in a religious sense or a religious terms, that something is holier, like Ernie is more holy than Bert, right?

[6:10] We're comparing the two. But that's not what the meaning should be used at. We take it to mean that they are more religiously observant or they are good or better than.

But when it comes to understanding this word, both the Hebrew and the Greek words mean to be distinct or to be separate.

So when we talk of the holiness of God, we're talking about the excellency of his divine nature.

What do I mean by that? I'm talking about God's exalted status. God's exalted status.

That his status is so much more elevated than our status. That's what happens when you are God.

To say that God is holy is for us to attest that he is separated from his creation.

[7:19] He created us. He is outside of us. He is not tainted by us. He is not tainted by his creation. But say we're over here. He's outside of us in our world.

He's totally separate. He's not a part of. If you grew up in an Eastern religion, they would say that God poured himself into creation.

And he is a part of creation. That is not how the Bible describes God. The Bible describes God as being holy. He is outside of creation.

And because of that, not only is he vastly outside of us, but his moral character is untainted by us.

When we see the use of holy in the Old Testament, we see that God separates people, things, and even places that are to be used and dedicated to him.

[8:25] We see God calling a holy people. That means that they weren't more religious or more pure. But they were being set apart for a distinct purpose.

We see God giving Israel a holy land. They built a holy temple. They dedicated holy priests.

Within the temple was a holy ark of the covenant. And that once a week, they were to keep the Sabbath, a holy day. They were to set these things apart for God.

So when we use that word holiness, we're talking about separateness. And in that separateness, because of who God is, there is superiority, there is awesomeness, and there's magnificence.

And we're going to get to that in a little bit. But we see in 1 Samuel 2.2, the prophet writes, There is no one holy like the Lord. There is no one beside you.

[9:38] Psalm 111.9 writes, Holy and awesome is his name. Isaiah 57.15, For thus saith that high and exalted one who loves forever, My name is holy.

Holy is God's name. There is no comparison to be made between us and God. He is holy.

We are not. God is therefore distinctly and infinitely superior to his creation and his creatures. So that's the first sense of holiness, holiness is to be divided from, to be taken away, separated, distinct for a special purpose.

Now the second way that we see holiness used in the pages of Scripture is to demonstrate God's magnificence or his majesty.

To say that God is holy is to describe God as king and as king with all his majesty.

[10:57] Exodus 15.11 says, Who is like you, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in glorious deeds, doing wonders?

We know what the answer is. The answer is no one, nobody. Nobody. Nothing is like God. Psalm 22.3 says, Yet you are holy enthroned on the praises of Israel.

You see, God is also a holy king. Not only is he separated, but in this sense, he is exalted in majesty. He exudes royal splendor and he has kingly glory.

In fact, his glory is so great in his holiness that we could not even look upon it and live.

In fact, Moses was only able to see it shining. He had to hide behind a rock and he could just gaze on the light that it gave.

[12:06] It was so powerful that God's royal splendor vast exceeds anything that we can do here on earth.

Turn with me briefly to Isaiah 6, 1 to 7. For you guys who've been here for a couple of years, I actually preached on this passage for my very first sermon here.

But I believe this is one of the most stunning passages when it comes to describing God in his magnificence, in his majesty, in his glory.

So I'll just briefly read. It's Isaiah 6 and 1 to 7. It says, 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. 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.

[13:10] And one called to another and said, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts. The whole earth is full of his glory.

Now, one thing that we understand is that earthly kings' greatness was measured by their trains. The longer their train demonstrated the greater or signified the greater the power.

And here is this Lord sitting upon his throne, and his robe, his train of the robe, filled the entire temple. And the temple would be symbolic of us, really, of earth.

That his glory is everywhere. And as Isaiah stood there, he was absolutely stunned. And I know for some of you guys, I've used this word.

Have you ever seen something that was stunning? Stunningly beautiful. That it stopped you in your tracks. I know perhaps some of you will say, you know, First time I saw my wife cross a crowded room, I was blown away by her stunning beauty.

[14:27] That is true in some ways. But in terms, we can be breathless about creation. I have this picture that I took when I was driving through the Alps, and there was this castle, and I just, I remember the greenest greens, this castle-like structure kind of down in the valley, and I'm up high, and I see the mountains.

And in fact, I pulled over my car because I couldn't drive anymore because my eyes were filled with water. They were like tears of joy, having never seen such beauty.

It literally took my breath away. And it's not as if I was crying, but it was this weird sensation. The beauty of it was too immense for me to comprehend.

The size against the Swiss Alps was gigantic. Its heights had been something that I had never seen before. And it's interesting, when I look at the picture, it doesn't do anything for me.

And yet still, nothing that I could see or anything you could see, whether it be the Grand Canyon Mountains or some of us even just being out in the coast, would ever compare to what it is to see the Lord in all his majesty.

[15:55] Even the angels, the seraphim, are in awe at the immensity of God. They cover their eyes because of the intensity of his glory.

And this man, this prophet Isaiah, he became so profoundly aware of his sinfulness and unworthiness before the glory of God.

Another way to put it is God was so big and he really saw himself as so very small, which is exactly how I felt at the foot of those mountains looking upon the castles.

You see, when we have a proper understanding, whether it be through prayer, through reading God's Word, through meditating on these truths, God's glory and the immensity that Scripture tries to use words for our finite minds to understand the infinite glory of God, our eyes need to pop, our jaws need to drop, our minds need to expand, our hearts need to be gripped, our knees need to get shaky, and our pride needs to be crushed.

You see, this is the beginning of worship. This is the beginning of being moved by the majesty of the King.

[17:37] It's not a place for sarcasm. It's not a place for folly or foolishness. It's not a place for wrong thoughts.

The only thing the mind can think of in those moments is worship. It's to understand that God in his holiness means he is the exalted one.

He is the one who's enthroned. He is the one who presides over the universe. This worship needs to lead to a zeal for God.

What's interesting is as Isaiah is in this throne room and he's hearing the angel saying, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty.

We read that the angel comes over and touches his tongue with a stone that has been heated at the altar of sacrifice, which is we understand now is the ultimate atonement for his sin.

[18:57] And what we understand by this is when we come to God in true worship, we understand his holiness, we understand his magnificence, and we understand his majesty, it has to change us.

It has to change us. And I want you to understand this. Isaiah doesn't change himself in light of what he sees.

He doesn't resolve to be a better man. He doesn't resolve to say his prayers more. He doesn't resolve or negotiate with God some kind of plea that he will be better if then. The only thing he needs to understand in the holiness of God is that he is a simple sinner unworthy to be in God's presence.

God does the work. God does the change. Let me ask you a question. How do you see God? [20 : 10] Do you see God on his throne, lifted up above this earth, above this universe, running everything, holding it all together?

Or is God simply a buddy, a pal, a friend, a dude to you? Perhaps he's your gentle grandfather who is half asleep on the throne and the other half wanting to play checkers with you.

How do you envision God? Because the Bible only presents God in one way. What's interesting, and I want us to really understand that, that when we have a high view of God, we will have a high view of worship.

We will have a high view of how we live our lives. We will put our attitudes, our minds, and our thought life underneath the magnificence of God.

We will allow God's magnificence guide us in those ways. So when we ask the questions, what do we want for our lives?

[21 : 28] What do we want for our ministries? What do we want for our churches? What do we want for our families? What do we want for our worship? It all begins with recognizing God for who he is and all his holiness.

The third meaning that I want to focus on this morning is holiness as God's moral perfection. God's moral perfection.

The fact of the matter is, God is completely without sin or moral blemish. Now, there are two sides to this understanding.

The first side is he is set apart from anything that is evil or unclean. In fact, the Bible says that God isn't even tainted by the shadow of sin.

And the other side to look at it is, God is the sum of all moral excellency and absolute purity.

[22 : 50] 1 John 1.5 says, This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light and in him there is no darkness.

What does this mean? It means all of God's thoughts, emotions, choices, determinations, judgments, his will are both pure and perfect.

That there is not even a shadow of sin upon anything that God does. Everything about God is untainted by imperfection.

That is why it's really important for us to understand that God is separate from his creation. Even our sin, our mess, the mud, the dirt, the grime that we can create in life does not touch God.

He is not affected or he's not tainted by it. Now, why is it important to understand this? If we're to understand that all of God's decisions and all of God's judgments are perfect, because he is perfect, when we question God or mad at God, and I've had people come up to me and say, I'm very mad at God.

[24 : 16] What does that tell me? What would it tell you if someone said, I question God? At the back of their mind, there's an idea that God could be less than perfect.

That's what that question entertains. That God is less than perfect. That God may be tainted by some sin.

Now, when you ask that person that question, they're not going to say that. But what in essence they're doing is they're placing their understanding, their judgments, their rules, their observations higher than God.

And now they're questioning God. That's what we see today. We're questioning the Bible, questioning it's an ancient book. The rules are outdated.

First of all, those questions just be lie in ignorance of what the Bible truly is. But when we meet people in Christian circles, I'm not saying that obviously they're in a struggle.

[25 : 30] They're in a battle of the will. They are questioning whether God could be someone that is obviously not represented in the Bible.

Usually what happens is they raise man and reduce God. And I'm going to get to that in a minute.

Psalm 5-4 writes, Leviticus 11-44, Leviticus 11-44, For I am the Lord your God.

Consecrate yourselves therefore and be holy. For I am holy. You see, when we share Jesus Christ, we need to make sure that there's more to this story that God loves us and has a wonderful plan for

our lives.

The reality is true. That wonderful plan is eternity. And that love is actually such a great love that comes from God himself, not generated by anything we could do.

And I'm going to get to this and why this is so important for us to understand we come to the cross. See, our base problem is that we love ourselves and we have a wonderful plan for our lives.

[26 : 51] We want perfect. We want ease. We want no diseases. We want no despair. We want perfection in our spouse. And we want our spouse to accept all our imperfections.

That's who we are. When we present God that he loves us and he has a wonderful plan for us and he loves me like I love me and God loves my plan and his plan is my plan, well, who doesn't want a God like that?

But the truth of the matter is God is holy and because God is morally pure and we've just learned in Leviticus that he actually hates sin.

In fact, as God is holy and God hates sin, and in fact, God is angry with the wicked every day.

Psalm 711 says, God is repulsed by everything that is impure and unclean before his eyes.

Psalm 114 says, the Lord is in his holy temple. The Lord's throne is in heaven. His eyes see.

[28 : 20] His eyes see. His eyelids test the children of man. Habakkuk 1.13 reminds us, you who are of pure eyes then to see evil and cannot look at wrong.

Proverbs 15.26, the thoughts of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord. You see, God's love for us isn't so great that when he loves and he sees man's sin, he just winks it away like some old grandfather that loves his kids so much and will allow his kids to do anything because he knows he's going to hand his kids over to the parents at the end of the day.

That is not God. You see, for him to do so would be to approve of sin. God is an infinitely holy being.

And because of this, God is not neutral to good nor of evil. Where is God? God. The Bible tells us that he is in his throne room.

The Bible tells us that his train fills the temple, fills this whole world. There is no place where his eyes cannot see. He's in a place where the angels cry, holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty.

[29 : 58] holy. Is this a God who looks upon sin and winks at it?

I'm going to tell you why this is so important. we live in an age where we would like to diminish sin. And when we diminish sin, if we're down here, we're not as horrible, right? We're not as horrible if God is up there.

Now, if God is up there and we start comparing him to a grandfather who winks at sin and doesn't take things seriously, he starts to come down.

And this is preached in churches today, my friends, and this has influenced our thinking in a great many ways in our churches. So, as man is really not that bad and God really isn't that harsh, we kind of get to this point where the cross, the greatest event in human history, is really quite small.

[31 : 33] And people use all sorts of excuses. Well, we don't want to defeat man's self-esteem. We don't want to make him feel so bad.

So, we're going to reduce God and we're going to raise man and we're going to make it really easy for them to be harmonized and get along together. That's oil and water.

It will never mix. You see, the higher God is and the lower we are, we need a bigger cross.

We need a bigger cross. And you know what? God can make that cross. The glory is never on us.

The glory which the Father has given over to the Son to save us.

So, when we raise us, lower God, we crush the cross. We're saying we don't need the cross. But that is not the story of the Bible.

[32 : 52] You see, God is very much aware that there is a blockade between us and him. It's called his holiness. God knows that we cannot come into his presence and live.

But like Isaiah, God's not looking at us to say, hey God, I'm going to pray more, I'm going to make more deals, I'm going to resolve to be a better man. God wants to build this great, big, huge cross for us.

Because within the greater the cross comes greater worship of who God is. It's greater exaltation of Jesus Christ.

You see, the cross provides a way for us to enjoy this fellowship with God. It provides a way for us to live in harmony with God. In fact, the cross isn't one of many ways.

The cross is the only way. It's the only way to experience his love. It's the only way to experience his peace.

[34 : 03] And it's the only way you and I can have access to the throne room. Where we may come and at the end of time, take off our throne and cast them at the feet of God.

And to say, God, all glory and majesty goes to you. Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians 5.21, for our sake, he made him, Jesus, to be sin, who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Jesus Christ, who is perfectly holy, perfectly pure, perfectly majestic, the one who is able to walk and talk with sinners just like you and me and never be tempted, who lived a perfect life, fulfilled God's perfect law.

It is only through the righteousness of Jesus Christ that guilty sinners such as you and me can be reconciled to God. God invites us in through the cross.

The greater the cross, the greater understanding. We don't have to fight that we are lovable. We can admit I am a wretched worm. And when we can do that, we can worship a great and holy God because we know that cross is greater than anything we can ever do.

[35 : 47] So to lower God and raise ourselves is abomination into the eyes of God. My friends, God invites us in.

He invites us in to experience forgiveness. God invites us in to be free of the bondage of sin.

God invites us in to be free from the eternal consequences of hell. God wants us.

Buddha can't get us there. Muhammad can't get us there. Mother Mary can't get us there. Brigham Young can't bring us there. the only person who can do this was the one who could rightfully die on the cross for all our sins and that is Jesus Christ.

If you believe that there's another way to God, that means you do not understand one, how holy God is and two, how wretched of a sinner you really are.

[37 : 04] And not just so much that you're a wretched sinner, but how much of even your good actions are corrupt, radically depraved, and rebellious.

You see, Jesus Christ came to bring you freedom. Jesus Christ came to bring you forgiveness of sins. You rebels, put down your arms.

Come to him. Come into the Lord's presence of peace. For you who've never found acceptance, find acceptance for the first time in your life in the glow of the majestic intimacy of a holy God.

John 14 6 tells us, I am the way, the truth, and the life. no one comes to the Father but through me.

For you who say, my dirt is so dirty, I cannot be clean, I am telling you, the cross is more powerful than you can ever know, and it will make you clean in an instant, and acceptable through his blood.

Come to this cross. come have peace with God. The only question I would have for you today is would you take that step to God's true holiness and experience holy worship and a holy life.

[38 : 48] Let's pray. Let's pray. Father, I pray that we would be overwhelmed with your cross, that we would truly understand the significance of making it big.

the greater the cross, the greater the worship, the greater our view is of your holiness and of your truth.

Father, you came not to condemn, but to set us free. Father, for those who are choosing to go to hell, I pray that you would change the directions of their lives.

For those who are slaves of sin, I pray that you would remove them from that lifestyle, those consequences. Father, I pray that you would be in the prayers of every good mother today who prays for her children.

I pray that you would give their prayers such holy power on this day. May Mother's Day be a day where a mother joins with your spirit to pray for the salvation of the children they've born, that they would experience spiritual salvation as well as the physical birth that they've had.

[40 : 13] They just pray that through this day that mothers would remember to echo your love, your grace, your mercy, patience, and virtue.

Father, I know there's many broken hearts, parents who weep over their children, children, and we even have children who weep over their parents. Father, I pray that by only declaring that you are a holy God and that we deserve the worst of punishments, can salvation truly be found.

May our lives truly demonstrate the beauty of this cross. For in it is found true salvation.

In your name we pray. Amen.