

Holy in Christ

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Preacher: John Lau

[0:00] Well, hopefully you had some good things you were able to share with one another. Let me just say the reason I got you to do that is because there are so many good things that we can share amongst each other and with each other.

But as we've just sung, there is something good that ought to be on the tip of our lips all the time, and that is the goodness of Jesus Christ. And that's what we've been discovering more and more in a deeper way here at St. Paul's in this series that have been joining in in the last number of weeks of In Christ.

As we've just sung, his mercy is more, his goodness is more. And there's something that we are deeply committed to as a church of discovering that more and more. And if there's something that you don't know at this point, we would delight for you to know in that.

We really would want you to know that. His goodness, I think, is reflected really well in 2 Corinthians chapter 5. From now on, regard no one from a worldly point of view, though once we regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer.

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come. The old is gone, the new is here. And all of this, the whole lot of it, is from God who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.

[1:15] That God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us so that in him, that's Christ, we might become the righteousness of God.

That we might become right before God. So that's the heartbeat of St. Paul's, that we have not just the goodness of Christ, that we are in Christ, and it's entirely his work and not ours, but that he's also given us this ministry, this serving the world with this message of hope in Christ.

In the next week, we have, if you've seen the Seasons magazine on page 18, we have one way that we can display that to the number of people who come to St. Paul's in the course of any given week.

But this coming Friday, we have our open house morning tea, where we just get an opportunity just to connect with members of our community. So I would invite you to be part of that. It's here, start kicking off at 9.30.

Come and connect with some of the people from our wider community who are already here on that day. And we've got at least two groups here on that day. But we're inviting anyone from the community to come along.

[2:44] So come along, be part of that, and just connect over morning tea and chat with members of our community. At the heart of the Christian life is the gospel.

It's what we call the gospel. It's the good news of Jesus Christ. I've just read it out to us from 2 Corinthians 5. There is absolutely nothing, nothing that any of us do.

Not a single human being can do, deserve to have a right standing with God. It's a gift that he gives us completely freely in Jesus Christ. And as we've seen in the past weeks, that means that the Christian is fully accepted by God, loved dearly as he loves his own son, Jesus.

It means that everything that belongs to Jesus belongs to the Christians. And it's solely, completely based on the obedience and the work of Jesus from the beginning to the very end.

We don't contribute a single thing to it at all. Even if you've been a Christian for five, six, seven, eight decades. You don't contribute a single thing to it.

[3:56] And the danger is that we can see, well, if that's the case, then it's a great deal. What a great deal.

You know, God's in the business of forgiving sin and I'm in the business of committing it. I mean, great deal. How then do I live? The Christian is in Christ to be like Christ.

And that's what we're exploring today as John brings God's word to us. But what the Bible tells us is that the gospel displays our sins so clearly to the world.

And therefore, we ought not hide our sin from God, our heavenly father, but to confess it with a repentant and obedient heart. So we're going to do that now.

And we don't confess our sin hoping to be accepted by God. We confess our sin because we already are in Jesus.

[4:59] It's the gift. Confession is the gift of the Christian. So let's pray together. Heavenly father, we praise you for adopting us as your children and make us heirs of eternal life.

In your mercy, you have washed us from our sins and made us clean in your sight. Yet we still fail to love you and serve you as we should.

Forgive us our sins and renew us by your grace that we may continue to grow as members of Christ in whom alone is our salvation. Amen.

Psalms 103 declares God's mercy and comfort for the penitent. It says, Let's continue to pray.

Gracious God and loving heavenly father, you are eternal, but we are finite.

[6:21] You are supremely powerful and we are powerless. You predestine the days, but we don't even know what's going to happen moment by moment. You are the one who is faithful, but we lack faith.

Not a word of yours falls to the ground, but we struggle to fulfill any of our promises. You are perfect, but we are marked by sin and failure.

Where our love is fickle, yours is a covenant love that is consistent and true. We are grateful that you have made it possible for us to know you and to relate to you.

We are so grateful for your infinite love in redeeming this broken and sinful world by the Lord Jesus.

Give us a strong sense of all of your mercies this day and the hope of future glory so that we might joyfully live, loving you and all of your commands.

Give us teachable hearts that are earnest and intense and passionate about what matters most to you. Give us the patience to labor hard and deep into your word, to meditate on it and encounter more of your majesty and your mercy.

[7:39] We are so weak and easily distracted. And so we need your enabling each day to stay focused and committed to valuing your word.

And so we commit to you, our preachers and our community group leaders, our next-gen leaders, that they may lead us from your word and pass on to us a biblically informed love for you.

May they be committed to the authority of your word. Shape the culture of this church by your word, that we might love you and love what you command.

And so please guide and govern us by your Holy Spirit in such a way that all of us who call themselves Christians may be led in the way of truth and hold the faith in unity of spirit and the bond of peace and in righteousness of life as we seek for your name to be honoured here in Chatswood and beyond.

We thank you that you have brought so many people from different backgrounds together into this city. And so help us as a church of forgiven sinners existing in such a diverse community to display your grace, your goodness, your beauty, your forgiveness, your mercy to this city.

[9:14] Empower us as a church to live out our calling and our unity in you by working hard to break down the walls of misunderstanding that so easily divide, increasing us a genuine humility and a love for all people.

So we would ask as far as the gospel does that you would humble us, rid us of the pride that would elevate one group over another.

Give us the grace to listen to each other and even here where we have wronged and done damage. May we be quick to repent and to seek restoration and healing.

And Father, we pray that we would be ambassadors in this world that desperately needs to know the hope of Jesus. Almighty God, you are our sovereign Lord and King.

And you're the one who blesses all who seek refuge in you. And so we pray for our world in all its devastation and destruction.

[10:25] We pray especially for Nepal and Tibet as they recover from the flash flooding and also with the risk of further to come.

You are the God of compassion. And so please provide for those who have lost everything. As the floodwaters recede, protect people from illness, provide them with resources to rebuild homes and livelihoods.

Our hearts ache for the families who have received the news of lost loved ones and for those who are waiting for the news. And for those who are waiting for news with a deep uncertainty of moment by moment as to whether their loved ones are alive or not.

So many people, nations even, deeply impacted. And so would you comfort those who mourn for the lost ones and those living with the anguish of uncertainty.

We'd ask that you would grant strength, endurance and skill to emergency workers and search teams. Keep them safe, we pray. May they reach many who are still alive.

[11:44] Direct them in that way, we pray now, Lord. As the whole creation groans with the effects of sin, we are thankful for our mission partners, INF and Anglican Aid, who are on the ground and ready to provide help and relief to those impacted by this disaster.

And so please give them wisdom as they determine where resources should be directed. And despite this devastation, please strengthen your people in trust and faithfulness.

We pray too for the five Nepali students that we are, this church is funding in their training right now. We ask that you would strengthen them in this moment of devastation, feeling all the impact on it. Strengthen them not just to be able to focus on their studies and complete their studies, but this would shape them for a life of service. Service of you in a country that faces so much hardship, devastation from natural disasters, persecution from groups, and even the lack of support of a government.

As they show others your love, give them opportunity to speak about the hope that they have in Jesus Christ, not just for now in this life that you are the one who walks with them, but you are the God who gives them life forever.

[13:29] Through this we ask that you would bring many people in Nepal and Tibet into relationship with you. Help them to know that you are God, their ever-present help in trouble, and that nothing in all creation can separate us from your love.

Lord Jesus, may you come soon and restore all things. And we pray all this in your name and for your glory.

Amen. We're going to open our Bibles. 1 Peter chapter 1. Mel's going to come and read. And as we read this and as John preaches, may our attention be to God's word that we might hear it and we might inwardly digest it and mark it because as Jesus himself said, none of us live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.

And so may it be life for us this morning. Amen. Verses 13 to 25.

Is this working? Therefore, with minds that are alert and fully sober, set your hope on the grace to be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed at his coming.

[15:15] As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance, but just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do.

For it is written, be holy because I am holy. Since you call on a father who judges each person's work impartially, live out your time as foreigners here, reverent fear.

For you know that was not with perishable things, such as silver or gold, that you were redeemed from the empty way of life, handed down to you from your ancestors, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.

He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake. Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him.

And so your faith and hope are in God. Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth, so that you have sincere love for each other, love one another deeply from the heart.

[16:51] For you have been born again, not of perishable sin, but of imperishable seed, through the living and enduring work of God.

For all people are like grass, and their glory is like the flowers of the field. The grass withers, the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord endures forever.

And this is the word that was preached to you. Thank you, Mel.

If you have not met me, I'm John. I'm a long-term regular member here at this church. I became a Christian in Hong Kong in the early 80s, and came to Australia in 87, and started coming to this church around 2001, 2002.

And I really love being together with you, serving among you, and being led by our staff team, Steve, Ash, and Nick, as well as Jess and Craig. I thank God for everyone of you, for you are my spiritual family.

[18:18] You have chosen to be part of this particular family, to do life together as the body of Christ. That is so amazing and wonderful. And living as a Christian is doing life.

It has a lot to do with our union with Christ, and how we are relating to each other. We have been reflecting on various Bible passages to ascertain what is involved.

We have talked about being found in Christ, saved in Christ, justified in Christ, together in Christ, and dead and alive in Christ. And if you have missed any of those sermons, please visit our YouTube channel or our app.

And indeed, you will also see today, I will cover a very broad and pervasive aspect of Christian life, holiness. Holy in Christ. And I have three points.

God's holiness, your holiness, and our holiness. We have just read a passage from Peter's first letter to the early Christians. Peter is one of the main leaders of the early church, one of the main disciples of Jesus.

[19:26] And he urged them in 1 Peter 1, 1 Peter 1, 14 to 16, As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you have when you live in ignorance.

But just as he who calls you is holy, so be holy in all you do. For it is written, Be holy because I am holy. The early Christians faced with a lot of challenges and opposition in their beliefs and relationship with God.

And so are we who try to live our Christian life in today's society. Instead of giving in and conforming to the world, he calls Christians to be holy in all we do, just as God who calls us is holy. Peter quotes from the beginning session of the Bible from Leviticus. This session of the Bible tells about God's creating this world and human, and how God established and continued to maintain relationship with his creation.

The very first time the concept of God's holiness was introduced straight after the world was created, on the seventh day of its existence. In Genesis 2, verse 3 said, Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the works of creating that he had done.

[20:52] This statement shows three things about God. Firstly, God is the holy one. He is the holy of his very nature of being.

Secondly, he made holy. God's method to make holy is by coming in and resting with his creation. And thirdly, he sent his sanctifying word when he makes holy, always accompanied by a blessing. When God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, he elevated it above the other days, setting it apart for the revelation of himself. When the Bible talks about holiness, it often refers to setting apart or separating.

When God rests from all the work of creating that he had done, the glory of that day surpasses everything before it. It is a glorious day for God to rest and enjoy the work of his creating. God's holiness is God's glory and vice versa. All God's perfection center in the word holy and his glory streamed out from it.

[22:04] From eternity, before and during creating, God has one purpose in mind for human and their highest glory in the coming eternity. That is to be a part of his holiness.

He wants to keep blessing us by his holiness. The seventh day never ends. Not like the sixth previous day where he say, and there was evening and there was morning and so-and-so day. In this day, we don't count the days anymore. We count our blessing in God, as Nick had pointed out last week. God said that never-ending day for us to count how God makes us holy, to consider God's holiness.

Even though human ends up disobeying and rebelling against God's original intent, but that does not nullify God's plan.

The second time the word holy appeared in the entire Bible is in Exodus chapter 3, when God appeared to Moses in flames of fire from within a bush.

[23:14] Strangely, the bush was on fire, but it did not burn up. And Moses wanted to go over to check it out, and at which it said, when the Lord saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush.

Moses, Moses, and Moses said, here I am. Do not come any closer. Take off your sandal, for the place where you are standing is holy ground. A fire often draws us towards it, but equally, we also instinctively keep our distance from it, because we know that if we get too close, it will harm us. In Exodus, throughout and throughout the Bible, fire points to God's holiness, and how such holiness endangers sinful people, and excludes them from God. Back in Hong Kong, I have an uncle that is a goldsmith, and he often invites me to his workshop to see how he refined his gold by the fire.

And the amber of that modern gold was so attractive, and I really want to touch him. But every time, my uncle says, as I want to move my hand a little bit, it's a strong warning to say, hey, this is not for you to touch.

Moses is whom God will give the law and whom God used to lead his people back to him. And during his first encounter with God, he saw something that attracted him, and he did not know that he was approaching the holy God and he was in danger.

[24 : 47] So God told him not to get any closer and take off his standouts, for the place he's standing is the holy ground. Why is it a holy ground?

Because God was there. God came there and occupied that ground. Where God is, there is holiness. The presence of God makes holy. God did not reject Moses or kill himself away, but he set a way for Moses to stand in the holy ground.

And the condition for that to happen is very simple and accessible. Remove your sandals. The removal of sandals is a lesson in simple obedience because obedience is a condition of being in the presence of the holy God.

Through Moses, the law will be revealed. When the law is given, sin will be manifest and humans will feel their distance from God. The intention of the law and command is that the human, in learning to know himself or herself, or his or her sinfulness, may learn to know and long for God to make them holy.

God's holiness is presented in a flaming bush. It draws near, but at the same time instill a sense of fear within us. Having a proper fear towards God and respect his holiness is what God asks of us.

[26 : 14] The English Bible uses words like holy, holiness, keeping holy, saints, sanctify, sanctification to translate the same word in the original language.

when God or Christ is called the holy one, the Hebrews, and the Greek word is precisely the same use when a believer is called a saint.

He or she, too, is the holy one. Peter explained the reason a believer is holy in verse 18 to 20 that was read out. It is not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life, but with the precious blood of Christ, chosen before the creation of the world, we feel in this last day for your sake.

Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God. People of God long to be made holy, Christian long to be sanctified in Christ. The full meaning of being a saint, being sanctified, the priceless blessing we long to fully possess, all originated in the awe-inspiring act of God through what he has achieved in Christ.

[27 : 38] God's holiness is revealed in his interaction with us. He made holy by his presence. God revealed himself to Moses in flame of fire from within a bush.

The fire signified purifying work, but the bush, the tree, did not burn up, for an everlasting tree has been prepared to show how wonderful God's plan and purpose for his people would be carried forward and brought to completion in Jesus.

Apostle Paul, which is another main leader of the early church, often addressed the believers at the beginning of his letter by calling them the holy people of God. To the Romans, he said, to all in Rome who are loved by God and called to be his holy people.

He referred to the believer in Philippi as God's holy people in Christ Jesus. And to the believer in Corinth, he said, to the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be his holy people.

Paul wrote his letter not just to the different churches of his time. His letter is written for us who come to be in Christ through his writing today.

[28 : 54] We have the same title as the early believer. We are God's holy people. These titles, God's holy people in Christ Jesus, holy people in Christ, sanctified in Christ Jesus, signify your holiness.

Your holiness is guaranteed by Christ. Christ makes God's holiness accessible by living it out through human actions and relations. He tears down the barrier that separates us from God and his holiness.

He brings God's holiness lead by uniting us with himself. To be holy in Christ means our holiness is a gift from God.

We serve for us, impart to us, and actively working powerfully within us simply because we are in him. In Christ, you see what God's holiness is, what your holiness is.

In Christ, both are one and both are yours. You can say to yourself, in Christ, I am holy. Holding on and growing in him, I can be holy in all manners of living as God is holy.

[30 : 12] In Christ, in whom all the wisdom and love of God are unfailed, the Father giving his Son to be one with you, the Son dies on the cross to make you one with him.

The Holy Spirit of the Father drawing in you to establish and maintain that union, a union as tight as the one enjoyed by the Trinity among the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit.

In Christ, it's a summary of what redemption has done and of the inconceivable blessed life in which the child of God is permitted to dwell.

In Christ, it's the one lifelong lesson we have to study on earth. In Christ, it's God's ultimate answer to all your needs and prayers. And in Christ, it's a guarantee and a foretaste of the eternal glory that awaits every believer.

look again at what Paul urges. Just as he who calls you is holy, be holy in all you do.

[31 : 20] For it is written, be holy because I am holy. I don't know about you, but every time I hear the command, be holy as I am holy, it feels like there's a vast, unbridged gap between God's holiness and my own.

And every time I have to remind myself and use that big word but, B-U-T. But in Christ, that gap is breached.

Christ's fullness completely fills the gap and gives me access to God and His holiness becomes mine. Christ's holiness is your holiness.

In Christ, God and humanity met. In Christ, God's holiness reaches us. claim us as His own and take on human form and can truly become yours.

If there are any anxious pleads and a deep longing for kindness thirst within you, you know you are a believer who trusts in Jesus but still don't know how to be holy.

[32 : 26] He is God's answer. You are holy in Christ Jesus. It is by an act of divine power that you are in Christ and are kept in Him. It is this I want us to realize and hold firm to.

Your holiness is not yours but Christ's. remember the divineness of your position in Jesus. Jesus Christ is a living person, a loving Savior, how He delights in taking full possession of you and doing all the work within you.

Holding on to this truth, as we go on, you have a rightful claim on Christ, on His love and power to make you holy. as His redeemed one, right now, no matter who you are or where you are, you are in Him, His holy presence and love surrounds you.

You are in Him and cause in that tender love that constantly wraps you in His holy presence and your holiness light in the acceptance and fully understanding of their presence.

Peter starts off his letter by addressing all his readers and all the believers together as though who have been chosen according to the full knowledge of God the Father through the sanctifying work of the Spirit to be obedient to Jesus Christ and continue to urge them now that you have purified yourself by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for each other, love one another deeply from the heart from you have been born again not of perishable seed but of imperishable through the living and enduring word of God.

[34 : 14] Jesus also teaches the same thing in John 8, 31-32 that obedience will lead to ascertaining the truth which is the intent outcome of the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit.

To those who have believed in Him, Jesus said, if you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples and you will know the truth and the truth will set you free. God gave His people the law through Moses.

The law given helped us to realize and understand our sins and how far short we are from God.

God used what is written to increase in His children the conviction that we must be holy.

and praise to the God and Father of Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us in the heavenly realm with every spiritual blessing in Christ for He chose us in Him before the creation of the world to be

holy and blameless in His sight.

God's ultimate purpose and aim for each person when He set aside the seventh day to rest and make holy is for us to partake in His holiness.

[35 : 26] His word gives us the knowledge of how we are to be holy and the joy that we might be holy and the faith that we can be holy all come from living words that were inspired by God's Spirit as we study it together.

Peter points out in the end of the first chapter of his second letter he says above all you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation of things. for prophecy never had its origin in human's will but prophets though humans spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is a key to our holiness.

He does the sanctifying work by first inspiring the prophet to write down God's Word and ever since the creation continue to remind the believers again and again of the truth.

God choose you as first fruit to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through believing in the truth. You might find that the more you meditate and study on God's Word especially when you do it with others together the less you grasp this infinite holiness and that the more you momentarily catch hold of it the more you despair of the holiness is so divine.

[36 : 51] Remember that this bricking and despair are exactly what the Word of God was meant to accomplish. That is the sanctifying work of the Spirit. God gave His Holy Spirit to enable us to live a holy life.

We need to understand the more you try to become holy by your own effort the further away you are from achieving holiness. learn to stop relying on your own wisdom just as we must stop relying on our own goodness as Stephen mentioned it's nothing but our own goodness to be in front of God.

Allow the Spirit of God to work on us through God's Word. Remember the one who calls you is faithful and He will do it. God's holiness is revealed in His willingness and His work in making us holy.

In the death and resurrection of Christ and the continued sanctifying work of the Spirit your holiness and our holiness do not only mean for us to enjoy but God's holiness also is for sharing.

When we gather together and approach Him with a humble empty spirit letting God showing us that the holiness He demands is utterly beyond human knowledge on human power to the soul that sees trusting in ourself and has no confidence in His own human strength He will reveal and actually give the holiness He calls to.

[38 : 31] Everyone can share in God's holiness. God's intention when He creates the world is for a human to be partaker of His rest and holiness. when was the last time you shared with others how great God is?

When was the last time you talked to others about God's glory in your life? When your mind and body is preoccupied and concerned with telling others about how awesome our God is you have no time to sin or confirm to the evil desire of this world.

So may God Himself the God of peace satisfy you through and through. May your whole spirit soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The one who calls you is faithful and He will do it. As obedient children do not conform to the evil desire you have when you live in ignorance but just as He who calls you is holy so be holy in all you do for it is written be holy because I am holy.

may may may Thank you.