

GOD!  
Message 16  
Text: Isaiah 6:1-6

INTRO: We are considering the personal attributes of God. No greater thoughts can flow through the mind of man than those that contemplate the God of the Bible! Nothing is more important than knowing God! I am not talking about knowing about Him, but knowing Him! John 17:3 says knowing God is eternal life. When I truly know Him, I will have a desire to be like Him.

This morning we are to consider God's holiness. We are living in a day when many who profess to be Christians know little of holiness or of a holy God. We speak of the man upstairs, or that black woman that is God the Father, and when we do so, we are so far from seeing God in His holiness that we have possibly never had a truly holy thought. If we saw God in His holiness for one split second, we would fall down and cry out in anguish of soul and say, "God help me, the sinner."

I listen to some singers. I watch some singers. And they are, so they say, Christians. And they are singing supposedly Gospel songs, but they are singing for God. But if I see right, they have not come from being in the presence of the Almighty and holy God. And now they want to sing for the glory of God. But it seems to me, many times they are not singing for our Almighty God. They want to be seen and appreciated for their musical abilities, and they do it in the name of the Lord, but for their own glory. They do not truly sing for God. Thank God, that is not true for all singers.

I think we preachers have to watch constantly, or we are not in the pulpit for God. We are in the pulpit for ourselves. We are not truly so concerned that people hear God as that they hear us. So we have the fear of man. We have not listened to God before we preach. We have wondered what people will want to hear. Instead of listening to God, we have listened to man and then give man what he wants. God help us preachers to come from the presence of Almighty God with a message from Him and for Him and to Him and about Him.

Surely it is true that we, here in the West, are as good at making our own god as the heathen. When we compare the god

many westerners have, He is not the Almighty, holy God revealed in the Bible. No, He is a God who is in it for us, not for Himself. He wants to make us rich and happy. He made us for us. God, give us a new vision of who You are, and then be merciful and let us live long enough to clean up our lives and live right.

### 3. Holiness

It is important then, that before we consider the holiness of God that we understand what holiness is. If I were to give you a piece of paper and ask you to write down a definition of holiness, what would you write?

The very first time this word occurs in the Bible it occurs in its verb form which we translate 'to sanctify' (read Gen. 2:3). Now in both Hebrew and Greek, the word 'holy' and 'to sanctify' share the same root. If we translated Genesis 2:3 literally it would read that God 'holied' the seventh day. This is the only time the root of this word is found from creation until about 2500 years later when Moses wrote.

Now the root idea of this word is, as best I can find, 'to set apart' or 'apartness'. With relation to this word, things are viewed as either common or holy. That which belongs to the sphere of the sacred is holy, or apart from everything else. Everything that is not 'apart' in this sense is common. Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary says, "Its meaning is not primarily ethical but formal, its fundamental force being to separate from the world and consecrate to God. To sanctify anything is to declare it belongs to God" (pg. 751).

Let me take you to the very first occurrence of the word holy, the adjective form of this word, in the Bible and we are somewhere around 2500 years after creation (Ex. 3:5 read). The place Moses was standing was the place God had set apart to speak to him, therefore it became holy ground, that is ground separated to God for His use.

The article in Zondervan I quoted from earlier also says that persons, places, days, seasons and objects may be sanctified or made holy. All the temple instruments were holy to the Lord. They were not to be used for common purposes. We still use these words in this sense. We sing the hymn, "Take My Life and Let It Be" and the first line says, "Take my life and let it be consecrated Lord to Thee..." We might sing more literally, "Take my life and let it be holied, Lord to Thee..." Then the song speaks of what it means when it says, "Take my life and let it be consecrated to Thee." It means my moments, my days, my hands, my feet, my voice, my lips, my silver, my gold, my intellect, my will, my heart, my love and myself. When we consecrate ourselves to God in this way, I have sanctified or consecrated myself to God Almighty and I say, "I belong to You."

We are in the process of buying land to build a church building. When we purchased that land, it became holy ground. If the Lord provides us with a building, it will become a holy building. The other day we bought a horse watering trough. It was a common horse watering trough. Then we bought it and it became a holy baptismal tank. It is no longer for common use. It is to be used for sacred purposes. I am always perturbed when children run around in a church sanctuary. They are using what has been sanctified for common purposes and it is not reverent.

I want to mention one more aspect of holiness as I see it. There is that which is intrinsically holy and that which is made holy. For example, God is intrinsically holy. You cannot actually make Him unholy. He is holy. Always has been holy and always will be holy. But, we as people are not intrinsically holy. We are intrinsically unholy. We are selfish, sinful beings. We can become holy, but we do not come that way.

Tozer says, "I suppose the hardest thing about God to comprehend intellectually is His infinitude. But you can talk about the infinitude of God and not feel yourself a worm. But when you

talk about the holiness of God, you have not only a problem of an intellectual grasp, but also a sense of personal vileness, which is almost too much to bear. The reason for this is that we are fallen beings - spiritually, morally, mentally and physically. We are fallen in all our ways that man can fall. Each of us is born into a tainted world, and we learn impurity from our cradles. We nurse it in our mother's milk, we breathe it in the very air. Our education deepens it and our experience confirms it -evil impurities everywhere. Everything is dirty; even our whitest white is dingy grey. Our noblest heroes are soiled heroes, all of them. So we learn to excuse and to overlook and not to expect too much. We don't expect truth from all our teachers, and we don't expect faithfulness from our politicians. We quickly forgive them when they lie to us and vote for them again. We don't expect honesty from our merchants. We don't expect complete trustworthiness from anybody... This kind of world gets in our pores, into our nerves, until we have lost the ability to conceive the holy..." and he goes on.

You see, we get to comparing ourselves among ourselves and with no higher standard, grey begins to look white and black begins to look grey. But not so with God. Listen to Job 15:15-16, "If God puts no trust in His saints, and the heavens are not pure in His sight, how much less man, who is abominable and filthy and drinks iniquity like water!" In Job 25:5-6 Bildad looks at it like this: "If even the moon does not shine, and the stars are not pure in His sight, how much less man, who is a maggot, and a son of man, who is a worm?"

You see, our trouble is that we do not see God for who He is and we do not see man for who he is and we begin to think ourselves to be something. But any time we have a close encounter with God, we place our hands on our mouth with horror at the stark contrast between God in His holiness and ourselves in our vileness. Turn with me to Isaiah 6 to see this (read 6:1-5).

One day the apostle Peter and his fishing buddies had fished all night but they had a fruitless night of fishing. And in the morning some of them were washing their nets by the shore and Jesus came there. And the people pressed on Him to hear Him as He stood by the Sea of Galilee. So Jesus got into Simon Peter's boat, went out a little way and began to teach the people. And when He was done teaching He said to Peter, "Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch." And Peter said, "Master, we have toiled all night and caught nothing; nevertheless at Your word I will let down the net."

Now fishermen know when to fish, and they fished at night. And they had caught nothing all night. And now, in the morning, when the fishing time was over, Jesus asks Peter to let down the nets and Peter says that this is not the time of day to fish but for Jesus' sake he will do so. There are a lot of lessons here. At this time, Peter is not yet a disciple of Christ and Christ is revealing Himself to the people as the Messiah. He is proving by His works who He is.

So Peter went out and cast his nets in and now he had a catch of fish so big that his nets were about to break. Now all of this might not mean that much to us. To Peter, a man of the Sea and experienced fisherman, came the realization that he was in the presence of someone far beyond a teacher and I want you to note his response in Luke 5:8 (read). What attribute did he see in Christ? His holiness! And what contrast did he see to himself? His sinfulness! The impact of this encounter did an amazing thing for this veteran fisherman. Look at it in verses 9-11 (read).

But I want to show you something very wonderful with regard to man and holiness. Peter recognized himself as a sinful man. That is step one. There is no question that we are unholy, but the question is, do we recognize it? What happened to Peter out there on the water? All of a sudden he realized how far from like Christ he was. All of a sudden he realized how sinful he was. When we

treat God with shallowness or disrespect we simply reveal how little we know about ourselves and how little we know about Him.

There is no doubt that if any one of us came close to God's presence, we would say, "Depart from me for I am a sinful man." Or, "Woe is me, for I am a man of unclean lips." The closer our contact with God, the greater our realization of our own sinfulness. If we are seeking God's face with all our heart and we see our own sinfulness, it is a good sign. It is when we do not see our own sinfulness that we are in danger. Tozer talks about James Ussher, the 17<sup>th</sup> century Irish preacher who used to go down by a log at a certain river and repent of his sins all Saturday afternoon and he says there probably wasn't a holier man in all that region. He must have had a glimpse of the holiness of God, and thus realized his own unholiness!

Tozer says something else that strikes a chord with me, and that is that language cannot express the holy properly so God resorts to association. One of those things we are all familiar with, which gives us a picture of holiness is fire. When gold is purified, fire is used. And when the fire gets hot enough under the hardened gold, it becomes soft, and when the heat is turned up, it runs like water. And when it gets that soft, all the dross, everything that is not gold rises to the top and can be skimmed off.

Hebrews 12:29 says, "Our God is a consuming fire." When God walked with Israel when He delivered them out of Egypt He revealed himself day and night as the Holy God, the consuming fire. By day, He was a pillar of cloud, by night a pillar of fire.

When God gave Israel the law at Mount Sinai, He wanted Israel to understand in particular, that He is holy. Turn with me to Exodus 19 (read 9-21). What we get here is a very powerful picture of the holiness of God. Psalm 24:3-4 says, "Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD? Or who may stand in His holy place? He who has clean hands

and a pure heart, Who has not lifted up his soul to an idol, Nor sworn deceitfully."

When I went to school at Prairie Bible Institute, the course, "Law and Grace" was offered for the last time, and it was taught by Paul Maxwell, son of LEM. And when he spoke of this event he said, "We are living in a day when we need to hear the thunders of Sinai again." And I might add, we are living in a day when we need a glimpse of a holy God again.

Every once in a while God shows us what can happen to people who do not recognize Him to be a holy God, or when they think themselves beyond what they are. In Numbers 16 we have an account of this that we should take time to read but for the sake of time let us read a few verses to get the flow of this account. Korah, Dathan and Abiram, according to this chapter, gathered against Moses. And here is what they said in verse 3, "You take too much upon yourselves, for all the congregation is holy, every one of them, and the LORD is among them. Why then do you exalt yourselves above the congregation of the LORD?"

So in the next verses Moses reprimands them. Now let us read verse 12, "And Moses sent to call Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, but they said, 'We will not come up.'" They told Moses why and then told him again that they were not coming. Verse 15 tells us that Moses was very angry, and He talked to God about it. So Moses instructed these men to put incense in their censers and meet at the tabernacle. And God told Moses to separate himself from these men that He might consume them in a moment. Now let us read verses 25-35.

Now let me show you something very interesting. In what we call the Lord's prayer we have these words, "Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name..." Now that word 'hallowed' means to consecrate or to sanctify. I think the request goes like this, "Oh God, may your name become holy among men..." The request is that God may be seen as holy by man. One of our great problems is

that God is no longer very holy in the eyes of man so we do not fear to do our own thing. God's name needs to become holy once more.

So we have seen that God is holy and man is unholy, but I want to share a most encouraging thing regarding this. One of the greatest doctrines in the doctrine of salvation is the doctrine of sanctification. And the doctrine of sanctification is the doctrine that teaches man how to become holy. The question in our Catechism goes like this: What is sanctification? And the answer is this: "To be sanctified is to be freed from the dominion of sin..." And as we become more and more freed from the dominion of sin, we become more and more free from sin and thus more and more holy. It is possible for Christians to become holy.

Listen to these words in Leviticus 20:7, "Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am the Lord your God." And 1 Peter 1:16, "Be holy for I am holy." Also Hebrews 12:10, "For they (our parents) indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness." And again, 12:14, "Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord."

I want to tell you something both encouraging and discouraging. The greater our desire for holiness, the more we will see our unholiness. It is discouraging for us to find we are so unholy because we want to be like Christ and we see more and more how short we come, but what should be encouraging is that when we learn how short we come, it is an indication that we are on the right path.

The latest "Herald of His Coming" had a front page article called, "Conviction of Sin and a Revival of Holiness." The writer, Brian H. Edwards says, "Revival is always a revival of holiness. It begins with a terrible conviction of sin. It is often the form that this conviction of sin takes that troubles those who read about



revival. But there is no such thing as a revival without tears of conviction and sorrow." He writes of the revival in 1907 in North Korea, as described by some western missionary. And here is what he described: As the prayer continued, a spirit of heaviness and sorrow for sin came down upon the audience. Over on one side, someone began to weep, and in a moment the whole audience was weeping. Man after man would rise, confess his sins, break down and weep, and throw himself on the floor and beat the floor with his fists in perfect agony of conviction."

Later he writes, "Sometimes after a confession, the whole audience would break out in audible prayer, and the effect of that audience of hundreds of men praying together in audible prayer was something indescribable. Again, after another confession, they would break out in uncontrollable weeping, and we would all weep, we could not help it. And so the meeting went on until two o'clock a.m., with confession and weeping..."

Then he writes, "My last glimpse of the audience is photographed indelibly on my brain. Some threw themselves full length on the floor, hundreds stood with arms outstretched toward heaven. Every man forgot every other. Each was face to face with God. I can hear yet that fearful sound of hundreds of men pleading with God for life, for mercy. The cry went out over the city till the heathen were in consternation."

Now I ask you, were these people perhaps much worse sinners than we, or did they perhaps get a much more clear picture of themselves and a holy God than we ever have? Oh, God, we need a new glimpse of a holy God. Oh God, I need a new glimpse of a holy God.

CONCL: And so, in closing this message, let me ask us this question: Is the God we serve the thrice holy God of the Bible? Is the God we serve the God who requires holiness of His people? Or is He a god, that no matter how you live, you rest assured you will go to heaven? Is the God you and

I serve the one who says, "Follow after holiness without which no one will see the Lord?"

Let me ask us this question: Have we come into the presence of the Almighty and holy God lately? Or did we come into the presence of a god who is there for our sakes. He wants to make us rich. He wants to make us happy. He wants to see to my needs so that I will be happy. Is that our god? That is a god with a small 'g'. That is not the God of the Bible.

In the year King Uzziah died, the prophet Isaiah saw the Lord. And He was sitting on His throne, high and lifted up. And the seraphim stood above the throne and they said, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is filled with His glory!" And the whole place shook and the house was filled with smoke."

Did you ever wonder where these rock groups and others get the idea of a stage filled with strange light and smoke comes from? And do you know what they want? Glory! They want to be gods. But there is a very vast difference with regard to what happens when the people come close to Almighty God and when they come close to these small gods. The closer people come to these small gods, the ungodlier they become. They get aroused by all kinds of ungodliness. But when people come into close contact with Almighty God, they say, "Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips. And I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!" I ask you, do you know this God? Or is your god a god with a small 'g'? Oh, let us come back to the God of the Bible, the God who is so holy that anything with an odor of sin begins to smoke and burn.



