

The Holiness of God (and our uncleanness)

Dec. 9, 2018

To KNOW Christ and one another more deeply,
To CARE for one another in truth and in love,
To GROW as followers of Jesus.
- CG Mission Statement

Worship: Holy, Holy, Holy

(Here is a psalm/song to help your group as you worship.)

Holy, holy, holy
Lord, God Almighty
Early in the morning our song shall rise to Thee

Only Thou art holy; there is none beside Thee
Perfect in power, in love, and purity

Holy, holy, holy
Merciful and mighty
God in three persons blessed Trinity

Holy, holy, holy
Lord, God Almighty
All Thy works shall praise Thy name in earth and
sky and sea

Holy, holy, holy
Though the darkness hide Thee
Though the eye of sinful man thy glory may not see

Holy, holy, holy
Merciful and mighty
God in three persons blessed Trinity

Icebreaker

Name a quirky or unusual fear that you have.

Text for Discussion: Isaiah 6:1-8

Turn in your Bibles and read this passage aloud together.

Aid for Discussion: Sermon Summary

Lost. Frightened. Adrift. Each of us has seasons where these feelings assail us. We live in socially and politically uncertain times, but more often our fears are much more personal. Something we've relied on – some stabilizing influence – has been ripped from beneath us. As we seek to heal and find sure footing once again, we realize how necessary it is to see ourselves as we truly are. But why do we lack self-awareness in the first place?

The Bible says we cannot see ourselves rightly until we've first experienced God. What we therefore need is an encounter with the living God. Isaiah does... and it shakes him to his core. Holy, holy, holy. It is the singular word which even approaches describing our Father, but what is holiness? It's God's complete transcendence and how He is absolutely distinct from all creation. It's the entirety of His divine perfection, solitary in His majesty, unique in His excellency, peerless in His perfection, devastating in His moral purity, infinitely beautiful.

What happens when we encounter God's holiness? We are torn, both fascinated and drawn in and terrified and threatened, tempted to pull away. We had an idea of what God's love and wisdom looks like and therefore how our future should play out, but then we encounter the power of His holiness – holiness that wrecks us and brings us low. But this is where genuine conversion occurs.

We think that having a relationship with God is about being saved from our sins... but we also need to be saved to holiness. Our lives are turned upside down when our very real egos meet the holy God, for this encounter fills us with a devastating self-awareness. When faced with perfection, we're undone – utterly aware of where we stand in comparison.

Repenting of our sins is not what makes us a Christian; it's repenting of our righteousness – our gifts, our strengths, what we're prideful of. It's realizing we've been using these (often very good) things to avoid acknowledging how needy we really are. And by feeling self-sufficient and proud, we have separated ourselves from God... which is precisely why God exposes it! That self-deception is keeping us from resting in Christ alone.

The healing and rest from our brokenness can only come on the other side of feeling the weight of God's holiness. When we experience this – when we see ourselves clearly as well as the depths of Christ's sacrifice to give us access to the holy God – grace ceases to be theoretical and becomes something personal, right in the midst of our brokenness. For until we know the actual weight of our debt, we'll never know how grateful and joyful to be.

It is here we lose ourselves in the wonder of the love of God for us. For He never exposes us except for the purpose of healing. Shame and condemnation are not God's will; He desires to mend us with His grace and utterly transform us through His holy love.

We worship the same God Isaiah saw, but Christ has given direct access to Him. God now urges us to approach His throne with boldness. So that even when the ground beneath us gives way, we could have unshakeable confidence to face whatever is ahead. Because we are beloved children of the holy God (Is 26:3).

Guiding Question of the Week

(This question is intended as a target for the whole conversation. Do not ask for responses now. It will be repeated later in the study.)

What does God do about Isaiah's guilt and sin problem? Has he done this for you? Explain your answer?

Questions for Discussion

(Remember it is better to wrestle deeply with two good questions than gloss over many. Sub-bullets are intended for potential follow-up.)

- What comes to your mind when you think about God?
- Describe what Isaiah saw in his vision of God (v.1-4). What did Isaiah see, hear, taste, feel, and smell?
 - How is this vision similar and different to the way you think about God?
 - What seems to be the purpose of the Seraphim? What are your thoughts about this?
 - What affect did the vision have on Isaiah and why?
- What does God do about Isaiah's guilt and sin problem? Has he done this for you? Explain your answer?
 - How does confessing our sin and self-righteousness honor the Lord's holiness?
 - Has observing someone else confess sin ever helped you to confess and repent from sin? If so, please tell how.
- How could Isaiah respond so quickly to the Lord's sending (v.8)?
 - When have you responded to the Lord's sending like Isaiah did? What happened to enable you to respond in this way?
- Do you think we need a vision to be impacted by the truth of God's holy character? Why or why not?
 - What encourages you in this passage? What challenges you?

Prayer

Spend some time thanking our Lord Jesus Christ for becoming our substitute to atone for our sin and self-righteousness and giving us access to God. Share prayer requests by praying them rather than telling them.

Experiment of the week

(A suggestion for engagement in following the way of Jesus this week)

Begin each day this coming week by telling God one thing about Him that you find awe-inspiring. Each day tell someone else what you find awe-inspiring about God.