

“For the LORD Our God is Holy – Part 2”
Psalm 99
(Preached at Trinity, March 18, 2012)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. As we’ve seen **Psalm 99** is a part of what are known as the Royal Psalms – Psalms 93-100. It begins with “The LORD reigneth,” which it shares in common with Psalm 93 & 97. Although each of these Royal psalms exalt some aspect of God’s sovereign reign over His creation and **Psalm 99** maintains this theme, it also has another theme that overshadows everything else. Three times the psalmist declares, God is holy – **Verses 3, 5, 9.**
2. Of all of God’s attributes His holiness shines with particular brilliance.
Exodus 15:11 KJV - "Who *is* like unto thee, O LORD, among the gods? who *is* like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful *in* praises, doing wonders?"
3. In the essence of His divine being God is holy. By holy we understand it two ways:
 - a. It refers to God’s otherness. He is apart, separate, distinct—He is holy other. In this sense, the holiness of God cannot be possessed by any creature.
 - b. In the second sense, it refers to God’s purity, His moral perfection. Since God is absolutely holy He must abhor that which is defiled and love that which is righteous. By nature, everything that is evil is repugnant to God.
4. As I began this psalm last week I declared that I would divide it into two parts.
Verses 1-5 – Holiness Enthroned
God is high and lifted up. He is worthy of all praise. All of creation must bow before Him. All of creation must tremble before Him. We must approach Him with great reverence.
5. This brings us to the second part of **Psalm 99 - Verses 6-9 – Holiness Encountered**
 - I. This holy God allows Himself to be known
Verse 6 - "they called upon the LORD, and he answered them."
Verse 7 - "He spake unto them in the cloudy pillar"
 - A. As we consider the holiness of God we must immediately conclude that in His absolute transcendence, in His absolute otherness, He cannot be known. Who could approach radiance that shines brighter than a thousand suns? Any mere mortal would be consumed. No mere creature could ever approach Him.
 1. The best we could expect is to look upon His fingerprint
 - a. We would be able to look upon creation and marvel at the infinite mind that designed it and brought it into being.
 - b. His touch shines brightly upon creation. This fingerprint of God is so obvious that one would have to be mindless to miss it.

- c. It shows the terrible blinders that are the result of sin. Many of the greatest minds upon the earth are groping about in ignorance.
Romans 1:21-22 KJV - "Because that, when they knew God, they glorified *him* not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. ²² Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools,"
 - 2. But it would be reasonable to assume that such a holy, transcendent God could never be known in a personal way.
 - a. This is what led the Deists to adopt the theory of God as the great Creator who set all things into motion and then stepped outside His creation allowing all things to follow their natural course. They saw God as a great clockmaker who started the hands of time ticking and is now allowing creation to unwind without any further involvement.
 - b. Today we have agnostics who basically believe the same thing. They don't deny the existence of God. They simply believe that if there is a God He cannot be known personally.
- B. But then we come to the second half of **Psalm 99**
 - 1. After declaring the holiness of God and commanding all of creation to bow in fear and trembling, the psalmist then declares that this God can be known in a personal way.
 - 2. The psalmist gives us the name of three men whose testimonies declare that human beings can have a personal encounter with this great transcendent God.
- C. The psalmist tells us of Moses, Aaron, and Samuel
 - 1. Moses served as prophet, priest and Israel's leader
Aaron served as priest
Samuel served as prophet, priest, and judge over Israel
 - 2. But the emphasis here is they were but men and yet they encountered God
God spoke to them – They spoke with God
Verse 7 - "He spake unto them in the cloudy pillar"
 - 3. What an act of condescension
 - a. First, human beings even before the fall were but creatures formed from the dust of the ground.
Psalm 8:3-4 KJV - "When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; ⁴ What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?"
 - b. Yet, God shows mercy upon our smallness
Psalm 103:14 KJV - "For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we *are* dust."
 - c. Second, God needs nothing beyond Himself
He gains nothing from communion with man
 - 4. The text tells us that not only did God speak to man, He allows man to speak to Him.

- a. We can almost expect God to speak to His creation. A king passes down decrees to his subjects. There are laws to obey and duties to perform. Kings make their will known, but even earthly kings limit who are able to approach them
Esther 4:11 KJV - "All the king's servants, and the people of the king's provinces, do know, that whosoever, whether man or woman, shall come unto the king into the inner court, who is not called, *there is* one law of his to put *him* to death . . ."
 - b. But our infinitely holy God allows His people to come into His presence
Psalms 99:6 KJV - "Samuel among them that call upon his name; they called upon the LORD, and he answered them."
5. How men consider this a small thing.
- a. We should see prayer as a wonderful and gracious gift. How we make it a common thing.
 - b. When God answered Joshua's request for an extended day we read
Joshua 10:14 KJV - "And there was no day like that before it or after it, that the LORD hearkened unto the voice of a man: for the LORD fought for Israel."
 - c. Are you amazed? Do you stand in awe and wonder that God hearkens to the voices of mere mortal men—and not just the greatest of men. He listens to poor, weak men and women like you and me.

II. This holy God demands a holy people

Verse 7 - "they kept his testimonies, and the ordinance *that* he gave them."

- A. God condescends to mortal man, but He in no way diminishes His holiness
 - 1. He loves what is holy and hates all iniquity
 - 2. To those who would stand before Him He commands holiness:
1 Peter 1:15-16 KJV - "But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; ¹⁶ Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy."
 - 3. We find of these men that they "kept his testimonies and ordinances"
 - a. We read of Samuel:
1 Samuel 2:26 KJV - " And the child Samuel grew on, and was in favour both with the LORD, and also with men."
 - b. We read of Moses:
Hebrews 11:26 KJV - "Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward."
- B. People greatly dismiss the holiness of God – to their peril
 - 1. Those who come to Christ must leave their sins behind
 - 2. God has always demanded obedience from His people
Leviticus 18:4-5 KJV - "Ye shall do my judgments, and keep mine ordinances, to walk therein: I *am* the LORD your God. ⁵ Ye shall therefore keep my statutes, and my judgments: which if a man do, he shall live in them: I *am* the LORD."
John 14:15 KJV - "If ye love me, keep my commandments."

Matthew 7:21 NAS - ""Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven."

1 John 5:3 NAU - "For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome."

3. God saves us that we might be holy

Ephesians 2:10 KJV - "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."

Ephesians 1:3-4 NAS - "Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places* in Christ, ⁴ just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him. "

III. This holy God shows mercy upon our infirmities

Verse 8 - "thou wast a God that forgavest them"

- A. While our infinitely holy God demands absolute holiness no man has perfectly complied.
1. Although God has condescended in approaching us, and while He receives His people as they approach Him, His absolute abhorrence of sin remains. This means nothing defiled shall come before Him.
 2. Now this is a problem. God is infinitely holy and by His nature He detests all that is defiled. In addition, He is perfectly holy in all of His judgments and He must punish sin.
 - a. All have sinned. As I stated earlier Moses and Aaron and Samuel here are simply given as examples of men. While they were men who were obedient to God their obedience wasn't perfect. All have sinned.
 - b. All human beings are under God's wrath. All should be consumed in His hot displeasure.
 3. This was an important aspect of Isaiah's vision

Isaiah 6:4-5 KJV - "And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke. ⁵ Then said I, 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 mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts."

 - a. Isaiah saw the holy wrath and fury of God
 - b. His response was to tremble before the infinite holiness of God. Why? Because he was a sinful man. He was worthy of death.
- B. God has shown mercy in providing a way of dealing with our sin.
- Verse 8** - "O LORD our God: thou wast a God that forgavest them"
1. If God MUST punish sin then something extraordinary must occur before man can approach His throne. There has to be a way for our sin to be removed. God provided that way. He provided a substitute. Again, Isaiah's vision demonstrated this wonderful mercy of God

Isaiah 6:6-7 KJV - "Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, *which* he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: ⁷ And he laid *it* upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged."

2. Isaiah was witness to the purifying work of God. Our sins must be purged.
3. Endless rivers of blood were shed in the Old Covenant as a testimony to the sinfulness of man and the need for atonement.

Hebrews 9:22 NAS - "And according to the Law, *one may* almost say, all things are cleansed with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness."

4. Jesus finally shed His own blood. There is no forgiveness apart from Christ.

Acts 2:38 NAS - "And Peter *said* to them, "Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins."

Ephesians 1:7 KJV - "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;"

5. God's holy people have been made holy through Christ. They have been forgiven.

C. This doesn't mean that our sin doesn't have consequences.

Psalms 99:8 NAU - "You were a forgiving God to them, And yet an avenger of their *evil* deeds."

1. There is the false notion today of a cheap grace. That since we have been forgiven by God we need not tremble at our sin. That now God simply overlooks our sin. The words of Paul:

Romans 6:1-2 KJV - "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? ² God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?"

2. Both Moses and Aaron were men of God. But because of their sin they both died without entering into the Land of Canaan

Numbers 20:12 KJV - "And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron, Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them."

3. They were forgiven but their sin resulted in terrible loss
Such is always the case. Sin is never without consequences.
No one sees sin as the terrible plague that it is.

- a. Does it seem harsh that Moses was denied the promised land after serving God so faithfully?
- b. Does it seem harsh that God killed Uzza who was so zealous to protect the Ark of God?

- c. Does it seem harsh that God took the child of David, the man after God's own eye?

Do God's words to David seem severe?

2 Samuel 12:10-11 KJV - "Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thine house; because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife. ¹¹ Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house, and I will take thy wives before thine eyes, and give *them* unto thy neighbour, and he shall lie with thy wives in the sight of this sun."

- 3. May God grant us the grace to flee all appearance of evil

IV. This holy God must demands holy worship

Verse 9 - "Exalt the LORD our God, and worship at his holy hill; for the LORD our God *is* holy."

- A. This God is worthy of all worship
 - 1. The word "exalt" means to lift up
 - 2. The only way to worship God is to see Him as greater than anything else.
 - a. We have to see Him as infinitely great. This must be true in every aspect of our life.
 - b. The first and last verses encapsulate everything else. God must reign supreme.

Verse 1 – "The LORD reigns"

- 3. The word for "worship" means to "bow down"
Do you see the contrast – God must be lifted up and we must be brought down. The only proper way to approach God is with absolute humility

- B. Finally, the psalmist declares the motive and sum of our worship
"for the LORD our God *is* holy. "

Let the earth tremble, because the LORD our God is holy.

Let us bow down, because the LORD our God is holy.

Is this the God you serve? What place does He have in your life?

Do you serve Him with holy fear?