

HOLINESS

3/24/13 FERNDALE CHURCH

We will deviate from our regular study of the text in Romans this week and next, but certainly the sermon this morning and the Easter sharing service next week are extremely relevant to what we have been learning and hopefully applying to our daily practice. Next week we will all have the opportunity to share about the significance of the Resurrection to our personal lives-our testimony, if you will. I would expect that many of the things that we share will be related to the things that we have been learning about our particular gift and our contribution to this body and the body of Christ, which we have seen in Jon's sermons the last few weeks. Because, you see, these gifts that we have been given weren't given for us to have and keep hold of...they aren't gifts like a birthday present, like a new dress or a tie or a new video game. They are gifts that we are given to give! A prophet doesn't get the gift to prophesy to himself. We don't get the gift of giving or service to give to ourselves or serve ourselves. They are given to the body to be used through its individual members, ultimately all serving the head, which is Christ. So when we have the chance to talk about what the Resurrection has done to our personal lives, certainly there is some benefit to us first, but it will not stay there. It will personify itself in how we treat one another, how we treat those around us. A giving, gracious God doesn't foster selfish motives. As we hear each other share next week, hear it with the orientation of how what is being shared benefits each of us individually and the body of Christ corporately.

Now, back to today's topic, which again is not directly from our text, but is absolutely relevant to the overall theme of what we have been learning from Romans these last few months. Jon has made reference to it, even quoted the verses from Hebrews that I will base my comments on. As you may have deduced from the Scripture reading and the hymns we selected, my topic this morning is holiness.

According to Strong's Exhaustive Concordance, there are over 650 uses of different derivations of the word...holy, holiness, holier and holiest. In the Old Testament Hebrew, the most common words are QADOSH (KAW-DOSHE'), meaning sacred (ceremonially or morally) and QODESH (KO-DESH), meaning sacred place or thing, consecrated, dedicated, hallowed. In the New Testament Greek there are several related words, most common are HAGIAZO, HAGIOS, HAGION, meaning to make holy, be holy (sacred) or a state of holiness. It would certainly make an interesting word study to compare the different nuances of the word in order to have a

more complete understanding of the different uses, and when I started this sermon a few weeks ago, that was my intention- to do more of a teaching session on the word. But as I have studied, it has evolved into what may almost qualify as a worthy sermon on personal holiness. Now, on to our text which will mainly focus on Hebrews 12:14- "Pursue peace with all *people*, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord". This text opens up a topic of great importance to us as we study how a body ought to function...because, folks-it simply **CANNOT** function without the individual parts being holy. So the question we **must** deal with is "**Are we holy? Am I holy?**" The consequence of not being is clear and severe- without it no one will see the Lord. That is a pretty solemn thing to read in God's word and much more so if it applies to us.

This question demands our immediate attention and our constant vigil. It demands introspection and prayer; it demands allowing exhortation from other believers on the subject. This question concerns all ranks and conditions of men...it is relevant to every member of the body, regardless of our particular gift, regardless of where we perceive ourselves to be in status (because as we have learned the last few weeks, all the gifts are of equal importance and all work to the completeness of the whole).

So, my question to you this morning is the same question I must ask myself; the same question you must ask yourself, if we are, as Mike used to say, going to "do business with God." In the hustle and bustle and hurrying and business of this world, have we stopped to consider where we stand between our souls and God?

I will try this morning to examine, or start to examine, what true holiness is and the reason why it is so necessary and needful, and then what I have seen about how it can be attained.

- I. First, I will lay out what practical holiness is...what it looks like in holy men and women. But let me tell you to start what it is not...it isn't just knowledge, Balaam had knowledge. It isn't status or prestige or profession, it isn't zeal for religiosity or legalism like the Pharisees and Sadducees. As we see in this parable from Luke 18:
⁹ Also He spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: ¹⁰ "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹ The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank You that I am not like other men—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. ¹² I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.' ¹³ And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise *his* eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me a sinner!' ¹⁴ I tell you, this man went down to his house justified *rather* than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." It isn't earned or weighed in the balance of holy deeds vs. unholy deeds. I am going to list a number of things that I think are attributes of a holy

person; but please don't think for a minute that this is a list of things you can check off on and attain holiness.

- a) Holiness is the habit and practice of being of one mind with God. This obviously requires some knowledge of God's mind as revealed in Scripture. We must practice until it is second-nature to hate what God hates and to love what he loves, measuring everything in this world by the standard of His word.
- b) A holy man or woman will seek to shun every known sin and to keep every known command. His mind will be inclined toward the things of God; a desire and commitment to do His will. He will have a greater fear of displeasing God than displeasing the world. A holy man as described by Paul in our text in Romans 7- "I delight in the law of God according to the inward man." Or by David in Psalm 119- "*Therefore all Your precepts concerning all things I consider to be right; I hate every false way.*"
- c) A holy man or woman will strive to be like our Lord Jesus Christ. He will not only live the life of faith in Him, and draw from Him all his daily peace and strength, but he will also strive to have the mind that was in Him, and to be "conformed to His image" (Rom. 8:29). It will be his aim to bear with and forgive others, even as Christ forgave us; to be unselfish, even as Christ pleased not Himself; to walk in love, even as Christ loved us; to be lowly-minded and humble, even as Christ made Himself of no reputation and humbled Himself. He will remember that Christ was a faithful witness for the truth; that He came not to do His own will-that it was His full desire to do His Father's will; that He would continually deny Himself in order to minister to others; that He was meek and patient under undeserved insults; that He thought more of godly poor men than of kings; that He was full of love and compassion to sinners, but that He was bold and uncompromising in denouncing sin; that He didn't seek the praise of men, when He might have had it; that He went about doing good; that He was in the world, but not of it; that He continued constantly in prayer; that He would not let anyone - even His nearest relations stand in His way when God's work was to be done. These are things a holy man will try to remember. These are things he will make every effort to apply. "He that says he abides in Christ ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked" (1 John 2:6); and "Christ suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow His steps" (1 Peter 2:21). The wristbands that everyone used to wear became trite and meaningless, but there was some real need of the question behind "WWJD"....what would Jesus do? How much time would we save, how much sin would we prevent if we would just ask of ourselves "What would Christ have said and done, if He were in my place?" We are on the right path of holiness when we ask that question and demand an answer.
- d) A holy man or woman will pursue meekness-easily led by God rather than kicking against the goads, long-suffering, gentleness, patience, kindness. He will be slow to anger, slow to speak, swift to hear. He won't be envious or boastful. He will be

charitable and gracious and full of affection for his brothers and sisters in Christ. He will, as we will see in Romans 13- "Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law." He will abhor all lying, slandering, backbiting, cheating, dishonesty and unfair dealings. Instead he will put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh, to obey its lusts.

- e) A holy man or woman will pursue temperance and self-denial. He will work to mortify the desires of his body- to crucify his flesh, curb his passions, restrain his carnality. As Paul says in I Cor. 9:24- 27:
"24 Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. 25 And everyone who competes *for the prize* is temperate in all things. Now they *do it* to obtain a perishable crown, but we *for an imperishable crown*. 26 Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as *one who* beats the air. 27 But I discipline my body and bring *it* into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified."
- f) A holy man or woman will pursue a spirit of mercy and benevolence towards others as Paul said "I will gladly spend and be spent for your souls". To do so requires getting out and acting on things...not being content to stand idly by and being content with doing no harm, but rather **acting** to do good. Mercy and benevolence, then, are not passive words, they are action words. It is not enough to think merciful and benevolent thoughts...we must do merciful and benevolent deeds!
- g) A holy man or woman will seek to have purity of heart. He will despise all filthiness and uncleanness and seek to avoid all things that might draw him into it. He knows his heart...his natural tendency...and will diligently steer clear of the things that will tempt him into sin.
- h) A holy man or woman will seek humility. He will desire, not in self-esteem but in Godly-esteem, to esteem others above himself. He will have true humility that assumes, like Paul did, that he is chief among sinners.
- i) A holy man or woman will strive for faithfulness in all things and with all aspects of his life. To "In all things, do heartily, as unto the Lord." Holy people should strive to do everything they lay hold of well-to the best of their abilities, like they are doing it for the Lord himself...because ultimately, that's who we **are** doing it for. Strive to be good husbands, good wives, good children, good bosses, good workers, good neighbors, good friends.
- j) Last but not least, a holy man or woman will pursue spiritual mindedness. He will endeavor to set his affections entirely on things above, and to hold on to worldly things very, very loosely. And I can tell you from personal recent experience, when you think you are holding onto something loosely, let loose a little more, because you are gripping it harder than you think. A holy man will live like his

treasure is in Heaven...that's where it is, right? **Right?** We are sojourners here after all, remember...pilgrims, just passing through. Rather than chasing after the world and all its trappings, he will be like David when he says "My soul follows hard after you, oh Lord."

- II. Next, let me try to explain why seeking out holiness is so critically important.
- a) For one thing, first and foremost, and most obviously, we must be holy because Scripture demands it...that alone should be enough to say "End of story...case closed." The Lord says to His people "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall in no way enter the kingdom of Heaven" (Mt. 5:20). And later in Mt. 5, and following the same line of logic- "Be perfect, even as your Father in Heaven is perfect." Then in I Peter 1, Scripture says ¹³ Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest *your* hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; ¹⁴ as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, *as* in your ignorance; ¹⁵ but as He who called you *is* holy, you also be holy in all *your* conduct, ¹⁶ because it is written, "Be holy, for I am holy." So, it is abundantly clear- we are commanded to be holy, and it is imperative for us to know what holiness is, what it isn't and how it is applied and carried out by God's people.
 - b) We must be holy because that is what Jesus Christ came to this planet to make us. As II Cor. 5 says-¹⁴ For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; ¹⁵ and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again." And in Titus, chapter 2- ¹¹ For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, ¹² teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, ¹³ looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, ¹⁴ who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify (make holy) for Himself *His* own special people, zealous for good works."
 - c) We must be holy because it is one of the most easily observable, most easily quantifiable measure and evidence of our salvation. One may make a confession of faith, but over the course of a lifetime that profession must manifest itself in a holy life. Generally speaking, the surest way to know if someone dies in the Lord is to know that they outwardly, overtly lived for Him.
 - d) We must be holy because it proves our love for the Lord Jesus Christ. This is abundantly clear in Scripture. We won't go there, but on your own time look at chapters 14 and 15 of the Book of John. Spread throughout those two chapters are these words from Christ: "If you love me, keep my commandments: He that has my commandments and keeps them, it is he that loves me; If a man loves me he will keep my words; You are my friends if you do what I command you."

- e) Finally, we must be holy because without holiness in this life here on earth, we will in no way be prepared for or even desire to enjoy the holiness of Heaven. Heaven is a holy place-the absolute epitome of holiness. The Lord is a holy being; angels are holy creatures. Every aspect of Heaven screams holiness. Revelation describes it this way: “there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life.” Why in the world would we want to be in Heaven, what possible enjoyment or fulfillment could we get from it, if we don’t desire to be holy, if we have not prepared ourselves here to be holy? Do we think for one second we would enjoy being in the company of the heroes of the faith in Heaven...do you think we would be comfortable hanging around with David or Paul or John the Baptist if we were not holy? Do we think for one second that death is going to magically transform us from unholy to holy?

Folks, I will close this morning how I started. I can stand up here and talk all day, but I can only expand on what is clearly, concisely stated in the verse we started with and that should be a sermon in itself....hear these words again and make your own sermon. Let these words sink in and get the full measure of what they are saying. Don’t put them down when you step out of here this morning. Do business with them, struggle with them if you must, but don’t tuck them away to be dealt with later, because that is a very dangerous fool’s game. So I close simply with this- “Pursue holiness, without which **NO ONE** will see the Lord.”

Let’s pray...