

Call to Worship

Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name; bring an offering and come before him.
Worship the Lord in the splendour of his holiness. Let the heavens rejoice, let the earth be glad; let them say among the nations, "The Lord reigns!" – 1 Chronicles 16:29,31

Song 'Holy, Holy, Holy' - traditional

1. Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!
Early in the morning our song shall rise to thee.
Holy, holy, holy! merciful and mighty! God in three Persons, blessed Trinity!
2. Holy, holy, holy! all the saints adore thee,
Casting down their golden crowns around the glassy sea.
Cherubim and seraphim falling down before thee, who was and is and evermore shall be.
3. Holy, Holy, Holy! though the darkness hide thee,
Though the eye of sinful man thy glory may not see,
Only thou art holy; there is none beside thee, perfect in power, in love, and purity.
4. Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!
All thy works shall praise thy name, in earth, and sky, and sea;
Holy, holy, holy! merciful and mighty! God in three Persons, blessed Trinity.

Prayer

Heavenly father, we confess before all things that you are good, you are righteous, you are holy, and there is none like you. We praise you, we worship, and we give you thanks. We give you thanks for our creation, for breath in our lungs, for the days you have given each one of us. We give you thanks that through Christ you have made us and re-made us, and made us free indeed. We give you thanks for our great hope – that we may finally see you face to face, that you have a great fulfillment of all things ready for us in the new heaven and earth. We praise you for the wonder and the glory of your plans, and the first fruits of that great homecoming we experience through the Spirit today. Great and mighty holy triune God – to you belongs all the glory, all the honour and all praise, forever, Amen.

Only a Holy God, Song by CityAlight

1. Who else commands all the hosts of heaven?
Who else could make every king bow down?
Who else can whisper and darkness trembles?
Only a Holy God
2. What other beauty demands such praises?
What other splendour outshines the sun?
What other majesty rules with justice?
Only a Holy God

Holiness

*Come and behold Him, the One and the Only
Cry out, sing holy, forever a Holy God
Come and worship the Holy God*

3. What other glory consumes like fire?
What other power can raise the dead?
What other name remains undefeated?
Only a Holy God
4. Who else could rescue me from my failing?
Who else would offer His only Son?
Who else invites me to call Him Father?
Only a Holy God, Only my Holy God

Scriptures

- Isaiah 6:1-6

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord, high and exalted, seated on a throne; and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him were seraphim, each with six wings: with two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. And they were calling to one another:

‘Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.’

At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke.

‘Woe to me!’ I cried. ‘I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty.’

Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. ⁷ With it he touched my mouth and said, ‘See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for.’

Message/Word

INTRO

“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory! – Isa 6:3.

That’s what the angels boldly proclaim to Isaiah in front of God’s throne. And they do it again when John sees them around the throne in Revelation. It is the central biblical revelation of God, that before all things, before he is good, before he is merciful, even before he mighty, He is Holy. We serve a Holy God.

How holy is He? Three times holy. In Hebrew, degree is indicated by repetition. If something is big – gadol in Hebrew - it is large. Doubled, the thing is massive – gigantic. Gadol Gadol. But Gadol gadol gadol– well that is unimaginably massive. And God is Holy Holy Holy – pure and wonderful and awesome beyond human imagining. He is so holy we can only apprehend it if he reveals it to us by his spirit.

Holiness

Holiness is a mysterious quality to us – one that does not easily make sense to finite unholy human being – it is properly alien to us. Like kryptonite – its not really like anything that we have ever encountered in this fallen, unholy, world. But holiness – Gods core quality – is vital for our faith. It is vital so we really know who we are worshipping – a holy perfect God, that no other being can compare to. And more than that, when we understand what holiness is, we start to truly understand the why and how of Gods will and his purposes. Its my prayer that today you'll have a clearer view of the deeds and the character of our Holy God.

WHAT IS HOLINESS?

So what is holiness? In Hebrew the word is Kodesh, often also translated as sanctified. For clarity I can define it in two key ways – Holy means Separate, and Holy means Pure

Separate – Beyond/Above

So how is a holy thing separate? Does that mean God is far away from us? Not really – it means that God is by nature beyond us and above us. Jeremiah puts it like this: “No one is like you, LORD; you are great, and your name is mighty in power” - Jer 10:6. So within this conception of holiness we see Gods mystery and transcendence – that he is truly unique, truly great and beyond us. He is in this bigger than we can imagine – imagine the far reaches of the cosmos, understand God is beyond and above that, and be amazed that this Holy God loves you.

Separate – Set Aside

Holiness is also separate in being set aside – purposed for a specific task. The implements of the temple were holy, the most holy place was holy, not because of an inner force that came out of them, but because they were solely used for a holy purpose. This is important aspect of holiness for us to understand because this is the primary way we become holy – by submission to a holy will. It's not my righteous that makes me holy when I say “your will be done”. It's the perfect will of God that sanctifies me. Remember – to Him be the glory, because only He is worthy of it.

Pure – unadulterated

So holiness is separation, but it is also purity. We can also think holy purity in two ways. First that it is unadulterated. Think of alcohol. The purer it becomes, the more powerful, the stronger its effect. Just a few millilitres of pure alcohol in a drink can make it lethal in effect. So its is with us, the more confirmed to Christ we become, the holier we become. Now we cannot be perfectly confirmed to God here – but that's where we are going as his holy spirit – holy spirit – works in us, and works through us until we can be presented to our Heavenly father, completely pure, completely holy. Perfect, and without blemish – that is the glory of the bride of Christ in front of the throne.

Pure - perfect

And that's our last key word – perfect. Holiness is being whole, being complete. Being healed. He is the God who has come to heal us, make us whole. He is more. What do I mean by that? I mean we often think of holiness as being less, as being missing out. We associate holiness with a sort of shallowness, that is about

Holiness

experiencing less of life, particularly the nasty bits. The holy person is like Ned Flanders from the Simpsons right? Good, but shallow and sad and two dimensional. But the reality is very different. Jesus is the way, the truth and the life. He has more – more orientation and purpose, more clarity and understanding, and more of everything that makes us alive than anyone before or after him. Even down to how much evil he experienced without succumbing to it. And right at the centre of that life, that fullness, is His holiness. He is the only complete human – what does he say on the cross? It is finished -its complete, its been made holy. We're all spiritually two dimensional – unholy, broken and incomplete. He is the new Adam, the new prototype Human, so that when are healed, we are grow into a completely new dimension of our being that belongs to Him. We are becoming three dimensional, becoming real.

Isaiah's Vision

So lets apply that briefly to Isaiah, and that great vision of God's holiness he witnessed in the temple. Isaiah despairs and repents of his unholiness in the face of Gods wonderful beauty. And that is the core experience of anyone who has seen the manifestation of the Holy one – awe, wonder, and despair. Awe and wonder and worship because there is really is one at the centre of reality who is holy and glorious and worthy of all our praise. And despair – despair because as he cries, he is unworthy. I am unholy, I live in an unholy world, what hope do I have? How can I have anything to do with this holy, beautiful, God? Woe is me!

But then in comes the angels themselves, bearing what? A coal. A coal taken from the holy fire at the centre of the altar – a spiritual manifestation of Gods own holy nature. So terrifying holy even the holy angels use tongs to grab it. And the angel of the Lord bears it to him on his hand. We get to touch Gods' holiness, we get to experience God's holiness, and live. Now that would be worth doing even if we died doing its. But instead the angel touches it to Isaiah's mouth. And God's holiness makes him clean, makes him whole, and makes him ready to live and speak for God's purposes alone. And what is Isaiah going to do after that? He's going to share the book of Isaiah, the most important prophetic work, including chapter 53 the suffering servant, 40 comfort for God's people, and beyond that the inheritance that is coming for all the peoples of the earth because of the work of the messiah, Jesus. God's holiness multiplies itself into more and more holiness in his people.

Application

So how are we, frail unholy humans to respond to the revelation of such a holy God? First, brothers and sisters, I encourage you, and exhort you, that with all the strength you have, "Worship the LORD in the splendour of his holiness; tremble before him all the earth." We only can only approach such exalted glory by humbling ourselves before Him; acknowledging that He is beyond and above us, and we are merely humble recipients of His grace.

And I call on to you to repent and be sanctified – set aside for His holy will alone. You aren't a clay vessel, to be used for playing the mud. You are a holy vessel of the most high God! Jesus himself has made the sacrifice so that you can become completely holy. When you come before your father in judgement, just like Isaiah before Gods throne, God will see you

Holiness

as completely pure, without spot or blemish, just like the lamb of God who died for you.

Finally, blessed brothers and sisters, one more thing. Know that God's will for you is more. Don't settle for a small, broken, truncated view of God's purposes for you. Get the full, holy, wonderful, bigger picture. He doesn't just want you to become completely whole, completely healed, and completely free. He wants to add a completely new layer to your existence. He has come so you can have life, and have it to the full. And that new life is not like the old life, it is greater, it is more powerful, more wonderful, and it is indestructible. It is eternal life, forever, eternal fullness, brimming over with joy. It is the closeness of His spirit, drawing you closer and closer to His holiness.

As St Paul says: "we will all be changed— in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: "Death has been swallowed up in victory.

"Where, O death, is your victory?
Where, O death, is your sting?"

SONG/PRAYER

Response to the message as lead by the Spirit.

BENEDICTION - Ephesians 3:17-19

May Christ dwell in your hearts through [faith](#)—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

This service prepared by Mark Holgate for HopeNet SA