

Sermon Transcript
Pursuing Holiness – Living a Holy Life in a Fallen World
Nov. 15, 2020 - D. Midyette – Holland Park Church

Did you spend time in God's Word this week? I love the way Matt starts his sermons with that question, because we need to be in God's word. The Bible is such a wonderful gift that our Father has given us.

Did you spend time in Prayer this week? I hope so. Talk about a gift – when Jesus taught how to pray, he said say Father. It's amazing to me that we can have a parent-child relationship with our creator.

If you are visiting today or tuning in virtually, thank you for visiting us. I am Dale Midyette. I am not the preacher of this congregation, I'm one of the five current elders of Holland Park Church. Except for David Lunsford, who has recently retired, we all have full time jobs out there – in the world. Some other Biblical words for elder are overseer, shepherd, and church leader. King James version says Bishop. Any of us would be glad to talk with you about our roles and responsibilities within the church body. We, elders love this congregation – everyone of you. And we love God and know that he loves you even more than we can – and he has plans for this congregation. Our deepest desire as elders is to connect this congregation with those plans – to keep us on this path the God has created for us – that His will be done, that He would reign here and that Jesus Christ would continue to be the true head of this church body.

We are going to be sharing with you during five Sundays between now and the first of January. And the scripture readings that the church office sends out for those weeks will relate to what we will be saying. The last two weeks of scripture readings have been in preparation for today's message.

Last November when the elders shared with our church family one Sunday evening, we used this slide talking about some key things that Christians – in particular, our church family is being called to emphasize.

SO IN EVERYTHING, DO UNTO OTHERS WHAT YOU WOULD HAVE THEM DO TO YOU, FOR THIS SUMS UP THE LAW AND THE PROPHETS. -MATTHEW 7:12

Matthew 22:37
Matthew 22:39
John 15:17

Love God
Love your neighbor
Love each other

Be Holy
Love Does
Practice the "one
another"

And you see here some very basic Christian principles – the golden rule – to do unto others as you would have them do unto you. The greatest commandment to Love God – certainly a way to show our love for God is by “being holy” – and we are going to talk about that today. The second greatest command to love our neighbor with the concepts in the “Love Does” book and series. What does loving our neighbors look like? Some of us are participating in a Tuesday night virtual class that Marcus and Wanda are leading – “Love First” – how do you really love like God loves? And then there is John 15:17 which says simply “This is my command, that you love each other.” And the slide says “practice the one anothers.” There are 59 “one another” scriptures in the New Testament. Encourage one another, Admonish one another, Confess to one another, Clothe yourself with humility toward one another. But mostly, in the Gospel of John, Jesus used the term love one another five times. And get this, in the letter of first John, the same apostle who wrote the gospel and recorded Jesus’ words, used the same term – love one another - five times. I think he learned something in his time with Christ – something very valuable.

It is really all about love. And the leadership here believes that principles of true agape love are how we will accomplish what it is that God is leading us toward. In this congregation – the gospel message of love has been preached, taught, and practiced. And it will continue to be. We won’t apologize for that.

Today, I want to focus on the concept of “being holy” – Pursuing Holiness - Living a Holy Life in this fallen world.

What does that even mean – to Be Holy – to live a holy life? What is Holy and what has it got to do with me? Let’s talk.

Well we know God is holy, don’t we? So how does God describe himself? When he was with Moses on Mt. Sinai, recorded in Exodus 34, he revealed himself this way, it says: ***And he passed in front of Moses proclaiming, “The Lord, The Lord, the***

compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, ⁷ maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin.” What a wonderful gracious God we have guys. But you know what God said next. He said, **“Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished...”** Our God is Just. Yes, he is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and forgiving – and he is just. That is his character. That’s who he is. Our Father is Holy. In Old Testament Isaiah and in the New Testament Revelation – those who are closest to God say he is Holy, Holy, Holy – Perfectly Holy – The idea of behind the meaning of “holy” is unique – set apart – distinct – one of a kind. That’s our God – He is perfectly Holy.

And you know something - He created us to be holy. I know we lost it – sin entered this world – sin entered each of our lives. And our Holy God – our compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and just God – our Father who art in heaven - He had a plan. **For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.** It says in Hebrews 10:10 **“For God’s will was for us to be made holy by the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ, once for all time.”** God has declared those who believe in Jesus Christ as holy. It says in John 1:12 that **all who believe and receive Jesus Christ have the right to become Children of God** – Children of God. Guys, we become children of a holy God. We become holy children of a holy God. We are made holy – not by our works but by the sacrifice of Jesus – He has set us apart and made us holy.

In 1st Peter 1:15-16 it says **“But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: “Be holy, because I am holy.”**

You see, he MADE us holy, but we are also called to BE holy. To live lives set apart for God. Leviticus 20 ties the two concepts together **‘Consecrate yourselves and be holy, because I am the Lord your God. Keep my decrees and follow them. I am the Lord, who makes you holy.**

Okay – He MAKES us holy, and we are called to BE holy.

So how are we doing church family. You say “Dale, I’m not perfect” – join the club – neither am I. None of us are perfect. But are you living a holy life – one set apart for God?

Author Jerry Bridges in the classic Christian book The Pursuit of Holiness says this – “God expects every Christian to live a holy life. But holiness is not only expected, it is the promised birthright of every Christian.” Our birthright! Not a burden of perfection that we can’t obtain. Its part of our Parent – Child relationship that we have with our Father. It’s his gift to us – He empowers us through his Holy Spirit to live holy, set apart lives.

Child of God - It is your birthright to live in holiness. We've already said that if you believe and receive Christ – you have the right to become children of God. I think it's interesting in the sermon on the mount Jesus said this about who would be called Children of God – He said “blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God”.

Peacemakers – you've heard a lot about that the last few months here at Holland Park. You've heard it from the elders. You've heard it from Matt. We've had two separate series of online evening classes about it. We've had two months of Bible readings – one from Colossians and one from the Sermon on the Mount where that was the central message. You see, its about our Christian maturity. Holiness is not just not sinning – it is truly following Jesus. Truly growing as Disciples of Christ. And each one of us is called to it.

And when we talk about growing as disciples, about holy living, we have to talk about dealing with the problem of sin in our lives. And when we do that, it can hurt. I don't want to hurt anyone, especially members of this congregation, and I wish I was a better example for you. But we are going to face these things in honesty and openness together. And as we do, we do it understanding that we are called to take care of the plank in our own eye before picking out specks in our brother's. And that's the way we will do it. So hang in there with me church family because we need each other.

We want to look at Ephesians 5 this morning. And I love the way it starts out...

EPHESIANS 5

5¹ Follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children² and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

We are his dearly loved children and we are called to love. We will never walk in holiness without love. It has to be love first. First Corinthians 13 tells us that ***love is patient and kind,... its not easily angered,... it keeps no record of wrong*** – it really sounds like God's description of himself on Mt. Sinai that we looked at before. He ***is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, forgiving sins***. If – we are going to follow God's example, we have to start with love. In fact – it starts and ends with love.

Ephesians 5 goes on to say this...

3 But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people. 4 Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving. 5 For of this you can be sure: No immoral,

impure or greedy person—such a person is an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.

Sexual immorality – whether it is pornography, homosexuality, premarital sex, adultery, harboring lustful thoughts – Sexual immorality is not proper for God's holy people. We've been called to something different. And I know it's hard – sexual immorality is all over our TVs and electronic devices. It's in the popular songs of practically every genre – Pop Top 40, Country, Rap, Rock & Roll, Soul, R&B, Jazz. Catchy tunes that make us want to sing along. Our society has approved of it – embraced it. The media is pushing it, wanting us to laugh at it. Companies are making money from it. And understand that lives are being destroyed by it. Some of our loved ones, and some of us are struggling with these things. We have to understand sexual immorality is sin - the sin Christ died for – and we have to turn from that sin so that there is not even a hint of it in our lives.

And we have to help each other. We have to remember love first. We can never hate or ridicule those who struggle with sexual immorality. None of us are without sin. All of our sins can be forgiven. And when they have been, we need to get as far away from them as we can. 1 Corinthians 6 says ***“Run from sexual sin! No other sin so clearly affects the body as this one does.”***

This scripture also talks about greed. Greed is improper for God's holy people. But greed is what makes our economy run right? Our country is very prosperous – God has blessed America – and I pray that he will continue to do so. But let me be clear, U.S. Citizens who follow Christ need to understand that they cannot serve both God and money – ***No greedy person... has any inheritance in the kingdom.***

And Brothers and Sisters, there is no place for ***Obscenity, foolish talk or course joking*** in a Christian's life. Its recorded in Matthew 15 that Jesus said ***“What goes into someone's mouth does not defile them, but what comes out of their mouth, that is what defiles them.”*** It is so sad when good Christians – with hearts of service and concern for others are careless and use vulgar or hateful language - putting them on social media as a self-indulgence. If you don't think it is hurtful – you are wrong. There is enough vulgarity in this world – let us not contribute to it. Instead, let the words of our mouth be pleasing to our Father. Proverbs 16:24 says that ***Gracious words (some translations say pleasant words) are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones.*** Brothers and sisters may our words always bring healing never hurt.

Lets continue with Ephesians 5...

⁶ Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient. ⁷ Therefore do not be partners with them.

We know that there are deceivers, some well-meaning – even good folks, perhaps even some of us at times – and these deceivers will tell you that those things that we’ve been talking about are not sinful. “It’s just sex”, “an alternative life style”, a little greed – “after all- your worth it”, “man, it’s just a cuss word”. Don’t listen – we are God’s children and we have a higher calling. And don’t be a deceiver, don’t be an enabler. Don’t encourage sinful behavior. It’s an easy trap to fall into. Because we don’t want to be labeled “holier than thou”, Hypocrite, or Hater. We must be on the side of both truth and love.

Please don’t see this as a list of rules – of “thou shalt nots” and “thou must dos”. Its not about being a prude or holier than thou. It’s about freedom from sin. It’s about the God-given birthright of every born-again believer to live holy, set-apart lives.

Okay we are at the home stretch now – just a few more verses.

⁸ For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light ⁹ (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) ¹⁰ and find out what pleases the Lord. ¹¹ Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. ¹² It is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. ¹³ But everything exposed by the light becomes visible—and everything that is illuminated becomes a light.

1 John 1 says that ***God is light, and there is no darkness in him at all.*** Its true. He is holy, holy, holy. And Jesus, who was the very image of God, came to us and declared ***“I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but have the light of life.”*** That’s recorded in John 8. But you know what else Jesus said about light. In the sermon on the mount he said that ***you are the light of the world. (Matthew 5)*** We are children of the true light. Now BE the light. You are MADE Holy. Now BE holy.

It would be easy to fall in the trap to hear these words and go out into the world and see the unholiness, then become judgmental. To point at them. Don’t fall in that trap. Today, I am not talking to them or about them. This is family talk. This is us. Jesus was called a friend of prostitutes and tax collectors– examples of sexually immoral and greedy people of his day. Jesus loved. And we, his children are called to love, even those struggling with sin – especially those struggling with sin. When we see the world and its unholiness, don’t miss that we are called to be light. And don’t miss that we are looking at specs in their eyes through planks in our own.

I hope that today’s message has been an encouragement to you. I understand though that it may be a burden to you. If there is unrepentant sin hanging over you, please know that you can be forgiven. We are redeemed. And we need to get away from that sin that so easily entangles us. God loves a contrite heart. And He loves you so very

much. He will forgive you. He will illuminate you so you can come out of the darkness and live as a child of light. A holy, set apart child of a holy, holy, holy Heavenly Father.

This church family is here for you. Hear that clearly – we will not give up on you. And we will help you in any way we can.