TITLE: HOLINESS

TEXT: Lev. 11:44; Heb. 12:14: Mt. 7:22-23; 2 Tim. 3:1-7;

Ro. 10:9; 2 Pe. 1:5-9; Phil. 3:13-14; Heb. 12:2-3

INTRODUCTION:

 This morning I want to talk about something that tragically is becoming something of a lost art within the Church today and that is holiness. Specifically the aspect of personal holiness.

Do you realize that as a Christian this is our paramount calling? To become holy!

**Leviticus 11:44 (NIV)** **44I am the LORD your God; consecrate yourselves and be holy, because I am holy.**

**Consecrate yourselves and be holy, because I am holy…**

Two words to look at here are consecrate and holy.

Consecrate ***= kaw-dash'***

**A primitive root; to *be* (causatively *make*, *pronounce* or *observe* as) *clean* (ceremonially or morally):—appoint, bid, consecrate, dedicate, hallow, (be, keep) prepare, proclaim holy, purify, sanctify - wholly.**

Hol*y* ***= kaw-doshe',***

***sacred* (ceremonially or morally); (as noun) *God* (by eminence), an *angel*, a *sanctuary:—*holy (One), saint.**

 We have been called by God to consecrate ourselves and become holy as He is Holy..

 We are to set our lives apart to become holy. We are to become morally and ceremonially purified. We are to become sanctified and set apart as a sanctuary of God.

In speaking about our culture today, D.A. Carson said this:

 *People do not drift toward holiness today. Apart from grace-driven effort, people do not gravitate toward godliness, prayer, obedience to Scripture, faith, and delight in the Lord. We drift toward compromise and call it tolerance; we drift toward disobedience and call it freedom; we drift toward superstition and call it faith. We cherish the indiscipline of lost self-control and call it relaxation; we slouch toward prayerlessness and delude ourselves into thinking we have escaped legalism; we slide toward godlessness and convince ourselves we have been liberated.*

Listen to this again….. *We drift toward compromise and call it tolerance; we drift toward disobedience and call it freedom; we drift toward superstition and call it faith. We cherish the indiscipline of lost self-control and call it relaxation; we slouch toward prayerlessness and delude ourselves into thinking we have escaped legalism; we slide toward godlessness and convince ourselves we have been liberated.*

 Has the pursuit of holiness become a lost art within our world today?

 Maybe we need to first look and see just how important the pursuit of holiness is in our life as a Christian.

**Hebrews 12:14 (NIV)** **14Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord.**

 **Without holiness no one will see the Lord.**

 We may try to dilute this or dissect it to subject its truth to our warped sense of reality but this truth of scripture is painfully plain…. **Without holiness no one will see the Lord.**

If we are not striving to become Holy just as God is holy, striving to perfect holiness in our own life then Scripture tells us that we will never see the Lord.

 The only alternative to never seeing the Lord is an eternity in the lake of fire, the place reserved for all of the disobedient and ungodly.

The Greek word for holiness carries much the same meaning as the Hebrew word we previously discussed.

**hagiazō**

***hag-ee-ad'-zo***

**to *make* *holy*, that is, (ceremonially) *purify* or *consecrate*; (mentally) to *venerate:*—hallow, be holy, sanctify.**

* Myron S. Augsburger in his book The Christ-Shaped Conscience, said:.

 *The words holiness and sanctification are not prominent in much of Protestant theology today. We have tended to speak of justification without a proportionate emphasis on sanctification. ... Holiness means that one belongs wholly to God. This is also the meaning of sanctification, being set apart as God's own possession. When this begins internally, with the heart, the transformation becomes something that affects the total person.*

 What he was saying was that holiness is the natural result or consequence of a heart that has truly been surrendered to God. That holiness and sanctification are results of a genuine conversion experience.

 If we make the claim of being saved, of becoming a Christian and holiness is not starting to be manifest in our life, if we are not striving to become holy as He is holy, if we are not becoming more and more like Christ and have no real or driving desire to do so then we need to ask ourselves if our conversion experience was genuine…

Some of the most sobering words of Scripture are found in the book of Matthew.

**Matthew 7:22 - 23 (NIV)** **22Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?’** **23Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’**

The NKJV says it this way:
**Matthew 7:23 (NKJV) 23And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’**

 Who is Jesus talking to hear that will stand before Him on the day of judgment and address Him as Lord, but will not be allowed entrance into His kingdom?

 They are people who profess to be Christian. They address Him as Lord. They did Churchy stuff. They prophesied in His name and even used His name to drive out demons and even performed many miracles in His name yet they will be denied entrance into the kingdom of God.

Why? Because they continued to practice lawlessness! They never allowed Christ to clean up their lives. They didn’t pursue personal holiness.

 They didn’t strive to become holy as He is Holy..

 I believe it is those that Paul warns his son in the faith, Timothy, about in:

**2 Timothy 3:1 - 7 (NIV)** **1But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days.** **2People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy,** **3without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good,** **4treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God—** **5having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them.**

**6They are the kind who worm their way into homes and gain control over weak-willed women, who are loaded down with sins and are swayed by all kinds of evil desires,** **7always learning but never able to acknowledge the truth.**

 Having a form of godliness but denying the power of godliness. ……always learning but never able to acknowledge the truth.

 This, I believe, is speaking of people who have deluded themselves into believing that they can confess Jesus as Lord verbally but not allow Him Lordship of their life practically--- make Him Lord of their life in practice. Those who will not allow God to perfect His holiness within their life..

We have talked about this before but when it tells us in Romans 10 how we becomes saved….

 **Romans 10:9 (NIV)** **9That if you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.**

 It is not talking about verbal adage here!

 You cannot confess a non-truth or a non-happening and have it be true confession.

 The word confess in Greek is *hom-ol-og-eh'-o,* and it means to come into agreement with. To acknowledge.

You cannot confess or acknowledge a lie or a non-happening.

Example: If you did a crime and are caught and as you stand before the judge and the judge brings the charges against you and you say, yes I did it, then you have confessed! You have come into agreement with the truth.

However, if you did not do the crime but maybe are just trying to cover up for someone else and the judge says here are the charges --did you do it and you say yes I did it when you didn’t then that is not true confession. You cannot confess a non-true and have it remain true confession.

You can only confess a truth, a reality!

If we say Jesus is Lord but we are not giving Christ Lordship of our life, not giving Him control of our life, if we are not striving to become Holy as He is Holy, then we have given a false confession and we have not really confessed Him as Lord at all---regardless of the words that we may have spoken at any given time in our life.

And Scripture assures us that without holiness being sought within our life we will never see the Lord.

- Charles Colson in his book, Loving God, said:.

*Christianity is not just a high-sounding ritual which we perform on Sundays. Christianity is abiding by Biblical standards of personal holiness and in turn seeking to bring holiness into the society in which we live.*

 Do we see the Church today striving to bring holiness into the world in which we live? Are we personally seeking to bring Gods holiness into our world?

 We sang a hymn this morning that talked about the importance of taking time to be Holy.

 *Take time to be holy, abide in Him always and feed on His word.…Make friends of Gods children, help those who are weak, forgetting in nothing His blessings to seek…*

The valuable guidelines given in this hymn for living a holy life are just as pertinent for us today as they were when William Longstaff wrote this great old hymn over a century ago. God still requires a holy lifestyle for His people today.

 We sometimes confuse holiness with piety, which can be merely a hypocritical goodness that masks inner deceit or impurity.

 A truly holy or Christ-like life reveals the virtues mentioned in:
**2 Peter 1:5 - 9 (NIV) 5For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge;  6and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness;** **7and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love.  8For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.** **9But if anyone does not have them, he is nearsighted and blind, and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins.**

 **Make every effort to add to your faith goodness;, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness,  brotherly kindness and love.**

 We are surrounded today by so much sham and insincerity within the Church that we are often unconsciously affected by those influences. To maintain the quality of life that God demands, we must determine to take the time to develop a life that is genuinely and consistently seeking the Holiness of God for our lives.

 The writer of “Take Time to be Holy”, William Longstaff, though financially independent, (son of a wealthy English ship owner), was a humble and devout Christian layman and a close friend and supporter of the Moody-Sankey evangelistic team that stirred England with the great revival campaigns during the late 19th century.

 After hearing a sermon on Lev. 11:44, “be Holy Because I am holy,” young William Longstaff began to make the achievement of holiness his life’s goal.

 Although this is the only Hymn that he ever wrote these words have been an invaluable influence on the lives of many believers who truly desire to live a genuine Christ-like life and strive to live a life perfecting Gods holiness.

 In speaking about this hymn, Take Time to Be Holy, Reuben Archer Torrey once said:

 *I wish we sang it more in these days. It takes time to be holy; one cannot be holy in a hurry, and much of the time that it takes to be holy must go into secret prayer. Some people express surprise that professing Christians today are so little like their Lord, but when I stop to think how little time the average Christian today puts into secret prayer the thing that astonishes me is, not that we are so little like the Lord, but that we are as much like the Lord as we are.*

 Holiness displayed in the life of a Christian is a powerful thing.

 In his book “The Holiness of God”, R.C. Sproul observed that unbelievers often feel uneasy in the presence of an obedient Christian. The holiness of God reflected in a believer's life makes the non-Christian uncomfortable. Sproul then told the following true incident to illustrate his point.

 A well-known professional golfer was playing in a tournament with President Gerald Ford, fellow pro golfer, Jack Nicklaus, and Billy Graham. After the round was over, one of the other pros on the tour asked, "Hey, what was it like playing with the President and Billy Graham?" The pro said with disgust, "I don't need Billy Graham stuffing religion down my throat!" With that he headed for the practice tee. His friend followed, and after the golfer had pounded out his fury on a bucket of golf balls, his friend asked, "Was Billy a little rough on you out there?" The pro sighed and said with embarrassment, "No, he didn't even mention religion."

 Sproul commented, "Astonishingly, Billy Graham had said nothing about God, Jesus, or religion, yet the pro stomped away after the game accusing Billy of trying to ram religion down his throat." What had happened? Simply this: The evangelist had so reflected Christlikeness that his presence made the pro golfer feel uncomfortable.

 I wonder, do we ever make unbelievers feel uncomfortable? Do people sense our godly influence? If we are identified with Christ and are walking in holiness, they should – Even without our mentioning religion.

 In his early life, the great German sculptor Johann von Dannecker gained a reputation for his statues of the Greek goddesses. Approaching his prime, Dannecker felt he ought to devote all his strength and time to the creation of a masterpiece, so he set about to carve a figure of Christ. Twice he failed before he finally carved a statue so perfect that when people gazed upon it, they were moved to adore the Savior it portrayed.

 Years later, Napoleon sent for Dannecker and asked him to "make for him a statue of Venus for the Louvre." Dannecker refused, sending the French emperor this message: "Sir, the hands that carved the Christ can never again carve a heathen goddess."

 Dannecker's sentiment is admirable, and serves to illustrate the importance of our singular devotion to Christ.

 Once we receive Christ into our lives and have our hearts purified through His forgiveness and become a sanctuary, a dwelling place of God, this should be our response to sin and living a lawless life….

 How can I embrace sin with my life after Christ has touched me in such a way? How can I continue to embrace the things that put Jesus on the cross?

 *"The devil tries to make the children of God live uncomfortable and unholy lives."*  These words of Robert Murray McCheyne, the 19th- century Scottish preacher, are still relevant today. He explained the subtle way that Satan trips up Christians. Instead of mentioning sin or evil, McCheyne said that Satan "beguiles them from looking to Jesus."

 A Christian who falls victim to his tactics is a little like the pastor who was visiting a popular amusement park. He decided to ride a barrel-like contraption that tilted and turned as you walked through it. The preacher said to a friend, "I'll show you how to walk through without falling." When he entered the barrel, it started turning from side to side.

 Before long, he lost his balance, fell, and began to roll around in the barrel. When it finally stopped and he emerged somewhat embarrassed, the operator of the ride said, "Mister, do you see that shiny object suspended at the far end of the barrel? If you had kept your eye on that instead of looking at your feet, you could have walked right through."

 To live our life perfecting the Holiness of God, to strive to become holy as He is Holy, in a world that has been tossed and turned upside down by sin will require that we keep our eyes fixed upon the shiny object of Jesus!

Paul says this I respect to his personal quest for holiness:

**Philippians 3:13 - 14 (NIV)** **13Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead,  14I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.**

Paul’s answer to living a holy life before God was to firmly fix his eyes upon Jesus!

**Hebrews 12:2 - 3 (NIV) 2Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.  3Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.**

 When we keep our eyes firmly fixed upon Jesus and we will be able to walk straight though this life victoriously, and when we stand before the judgment seat of Christ the words that we will hear the Lord speak to us will not be away from me you who practice lawlessness-- but the words that we will hear will be Well Done! Good and faithful servant….Enter your reward!

 One thing I want to point out here is that Scripture doesn’t say, be perfect as I am perfect says the Lord but it says be holy because I am holy…

 In this life we will never be as perfect as God but that is not what He has commanded us…

 He has called us to be holy! Be set apart wholly to Him! Live our lives as though He was living His life through us…

 We have not been called to be perfect but we have been called to be being perfected…

The process of perfection is to start now, in this life. But our perfection won’t be complete until we enter the next life..

**14Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord.**

Do not be deceived… **without holiness no one will see the Lord.**

Is it your hope to literally one day see God?

 Are you striving to be holy as He is holy?

Have you made holiness your life’s goal?

And are you striving to reflect His holiness into the part of the world that God has placed you so that others can get a glimpse of Him in you?

 If we are ever to expect a much needed revival to come upon this nation it must first start with us, the Church, the Body of Christ.

 I believe before revival will ever come to America and turn us from the current path to national destruction we are currently on and put us back on the path our founders set us upon as “one nation Under God” will require each and all of us to seek the holiness of God in our own lives. Personally striving to be Holy as He is Holy.