

David Brown: The Holiness of God - Part II (30/11/19)

Scripture Reading:

"For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways," says the Lord.
"For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts." **Isiah 55:8,9**

Review:

Last week Pastor Mark looked at some of the complex realities that are associated with God's holiness. Today, we are going to build on that, leading to a conclusion - our response.

Isaiah 6:1-5 - When Isaiah encountered the glory of God he became acutely aware of His utter uncleanness and unworthiness.

2 Thessalonians 1:8 & Revelation 19:11-16 - The picture of Jesus that scripture presents is more complex than we often realise.

Luke 5 & Mark 4 - When the disciples encountered glimpses of the divinity of Christ they shrunk back in terror.

"Holiness is the single thing that separates Him from us." Pastor Mark Turner

Defining Holiness:

Holy = Different, Set Apart, Other (Gross oversimplification).

"One does not define God. Similarly, the idea of holiness is at once understandable and elusive. Nevertheless, there is not term equal to the fullness inherent in holiness. All of heaven's hosts, Israel, and the church ascribe praise to a holy God because that idea sets him apart from everything else (Ex 15:11; Is 6:3; Rev 4:8). Holiness is what God is. Holiness also comprises his plan for his people." William Ury

Isaiah 44 - The folly of idolatry.

God is not man. He is 'set apart' from us, in that He created us. He is creator, we are creature. There is an essential difference between Him and us. Therefore, He deserves a response that is fundamentally different.

"Look to Me, and be saved, all you ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other."

Isaiah 45:22

Just as a diamond has many facets - upon which we can look - each having its own unique semblance, God has many aspects upon which we can look. But, each of those points of view, different as they all are, view the same core object - God. And, what is God? Holy. Other. Different.

The Faithfulness:

Exodus 3 - Take off your shoes.

When Moses came to the burning bush God asked him to take off his shoes because that ground was holy. What was it that was holy about that place? Apart from the obvious fact that the presence of God was being manifested through that experience and Moses was entering into direct communion with God, the act was highly symbolic. It was also the message itself that was holy. The message told of a different kind of a God. A God who doesn't give up on His people. A God who keeps His promises. How? Notice the way that God introduces Himself to Moses. He says: "I am the God of your father - the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." Moses was a Hebrew. As a Hebrew this would have meant something specific. This introduction invoked the idea of covenant. Which, in the mind of a Jew, was the pillar upon which their identity was built. To them, invoking the phrase 'the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob' was to say 'the God of covenant.' The faithful God! The God

who will keep His promises! And then, upon that foundation, God promises to deliver the Hebrews from their slavery to the Egyptians. That is a promise that Moses can be sure God will keep! Why? Because this is the God of Abraham. The God of covenant. The faithful God. This is an attribute of this holy God that manifests just how distinct He is from us. We make promises, and then promptly break them. We try to keep promises, and then fall short of those promises. But God, who is holy (different) than us is faithful! God who is set apart from our fallen ways, dwells far beyond our promise breaking ways in a realm of commitment that we can only long for. This is, in a very real sense, why the ground upon which Moses stood that day was holy. Because it was upon that ground, that Moses was made a promise by the God who cannot break faith.

Genesis 22:10-14 - Your only son, whom you love.

God revealed to Abraham that He was distinct from all others by providing a sacrifice, rather than requiring one! This God is faithful to His promises.

Again, what sets God apart from all others is His faithfulness. He is distinct from all others! Why? Because He is trustworthy! You can bet your life on His promises.

Daniel 9 - How far will this faithful God go?

Daniel is praying. He is confessing the unfaithfulness of the people, and imploring God to continue to be faithful, in spite of their faithlessness. How far will God's faithfulness extend? Daniel finds out. The angel Gabriel tells them exactly how far God will go. He will go to the end of Himself! Why? Because that is who He is!

"God is so desperate to be able to relate to you and I that, in Jesus, He forged an interminable connection with us." David Brown

The Condescension:

Hebrews 1:1-4 - Jesus is God! He is completely distinct from all others. No one can compare to Him.

Hebrews 2:5-12 - Yet, in spite of the fact that Jesus was God. Then,

Hebrews 2:16-18 -

Hebrews 2:14,15 -

"Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession." **Hebrews 4:14-16**

Before the Throne of God Above

Verse 1:

Before the throne of God above
I have a strong and perfect plea
A great High Priest whose name is love
Who ever lives and pleads for me
My name is graven on His hands
My name is written on His heart
I know that while in heaven He stands
No tongue can bid me thence depart.

Verse 2:

When Satan tempts me to despair
And tells me of the guilt within
Upward I look and see Him there
Who made an end of all my sin
Because the sinless Saviour died
My sinful soul is counted free

For God the Just is satisfied
To look on Him and pardon me.

Verse 3:

Behold Him there, the risen Lamb
My perfect, spotless Righteousness
The great unchangeable I AM
The King of glory and of grace
One with Himself, I cannot die
My soul is purchased by His blood
My life is hid with Christ on high
With Christ my Saviour and my God.

The Response:

1 Peter 1:13-20 - God calls us to be holy, because He is holy.

According to Peter, there are three solid reasons that demand our response:

1. The Character of God - God's thoughts are far above our thoughts, and way beyond ours. That is to say that He is good - beyond our capabilities. He is competent - beyond our possibilities. God is holy, and thus deserves a holy response. He has proved it. Time and time again, He has earned the title. He deserves to be honoured appropriately! It is only reasonable.
2. The Certainty of Judgment - The next reason given is that there is coming a day when we will stand before this holy God and be judged. Because God is so far beyond us, His presence is outside the possibilities for sinners like us - unless we are cleansed. As mentioned last week, this is exactly the way God responded to Isaiah when he cried out to God about His unworthiness. God cleansed Him, making Him worthy by virtue of this free gift of the creator.
3. The Cost of Redemption - The final reason that Peter gives as reason for us to be holy is the extreme cost involved in our redemption. God has sacrificed so much! In Christ, God gave up everything that separated Him from us, in order that we might again be able to stand in His presence! That is reason enough to bow at His feet in humble worship.

In the book of Revelation, John comments on the same idea. According to Him, it is boiled down to two main factors:

1. **Revelation 4:8-11** - God deserves our worship because He is our Creator. He is distinct from us. He is creator, we are creature.
2. **Revelation 5:1-14** - God deserves our worship because He is our Redeemer. He is distinct from us. He is our hope, without Him, we were helpless.

God is like a multifaceted diamond! He is **pure, undefiled, holy!** What makes Him distinct from us is that He is creator and we are creature. Yet, we have seen that from each angle into which we look at Him, what we see is that He is of a quality of existence beyond anything that is natural to us. He is distinctly better than we are.

From every angle that we behold Him, He is **beautiful!** Through the facet of His love - He is beautiful! Through the facet of His faithfulness - He is beautiful! Through the facet of His justice - He is beautiful!

“Be holy, for I am holy.” **1 Peter 1:16**

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