

Sermon Draft

Text: 1 Corinthians 3:10-13, Leviticus 19:1-18

Sermon: Holy Is as Holy Does

It seems to be a prevalent thought among many people that the God of the Old Testament as vengeful, looking down on the people of earth with a magnifying glass, raining down his fire and brimstone when they don't measure up to a bunch of rules he himself has given them. If people would live according to these statutes, they could avert his anger and find themselves in the joys of paradise. We've all heard it "How could God do such a thing" "How could God let that happen." But wrathful and demanding, that's that Old Testament God.

Well, of course, that idea is incorrect, there's only one God, and the coming of Jesus in the flesh of man has revealed quite clearly who God was and is. He is merciful and compassionate. And how about one more word? Holy.

Both our Old Testament lesson and our Epistle text for this morning show us that for God and for us, Holy Is as Holy Does.

God's holiness is dangerous to sinners. In Exodus, we read: **"No one can see God and live."** (Exodus 33:20) Our culture, our world and even the church has lost this understanding of the danger of God's holiness, which means that it has lost the fear of the Lord. What is there to be afraid of? God is a nice guy, right? Again, as we turn to Scripture we read: **"Our God is a consuming fire."** (Hebrews 12:29) Sinners cannot simply walk up to God and shake hands. But all is not lost, the Lord makes a way for us to be close to him and for his glory to dwell with us.

In the Old Testament, the Lord was present in the tabernacle, the outer court, the inner court, and Holy Place, and the Most Holy Place. The people could come close, the priest could come a little bit closer, but only with a sacrifice.

That's because sin always separates us from God. Sinful creatures cannot be in the presence of the Holy God.

Once a year, the high priest would enter into the Most Holy Place, and he would bring the blood of the atoning sacrifice to cover the people's sins. Every Old Testament sacrifice was a preaching Law and Gospel. Every sinner should be having their blood shed and be burnt on the altar. But here, at the tabernacle and the temple, the sinner sees that God accepts the blood of another in their place.

So, every sacrifice is a preaching of and pointing to the sacrifice of Jesus and the forgiveness that he won on the cross for us. God dwelt with his people in the tabernacle and the temple because the people were forgiven. God's holiness did not consume them because by faith they had the righteousness of Christ through the blood of the sacrificed Lamb.

In the New Testament, through the incarnation, God is present with us in Christ. Things have now changed instead of dwelling in the temple in Jerusalem he now dwells with us in Christ. This is part of what we hear each Advent season and Christmas, Oh come, Oh Come Emanuel. Jesus is Emanuel, God with us. We eagerly await the arrival and now return of Christ.

John opens his Gospel with the wonderful words: ***“The Word became flesh and dwelt (tabernacled) among us, and we have seen his glory.”*** (John 1:14) He is the glory of God dwelling with us sinners. By Jesus’ death and resurrection, we have been reconciled to God. We now live in him and him in us. And someday we will go to live with him in heaven, together evermore.

The Church, the Body of Christ is the temple of God, and God is now at home with us. Even today Jesus continues to dwell with us.

While we were still sinners, enemies of God Christ died for us, for our sins. Even though we are still sinners as long as we live upon this earth and as such should be separated from God, because that is what sin does it separates us from God, our sins are forgiven, payed for though the blood of Jesus Christ. And now we are holy and united in him.

Therefore, Paul can use the picture of the magnificent temple to describe the Church. He isn't talking about a building. He is talking about Christians. Our building is nice but it is not the Church, we are and all Christians around the world are. We are the bricks, the holy stones, that Jesus uses to build his temple upon the earth. We are more, we are his voice, his hands, his messengers and missionaries here in this place and around the world. ***"Do you not know that you are God's temple and God's Spirit dwells in you?"***

In each of us and all believers Christ dwells.

We are never alone; God in Christ is always with us and promises never to abandon us. What wonderful news, the Good News of salvation is ours. In Christ, we have comfort and peace, in Jesus our crucified and risen Savior God is present.

We, the Church, are mercifully built into the Temple of God. Because of our sins, we should be far from him, far from his face and his kindness forever. But through the sacrifice of Jesus, we are made fit for the presence of God. His holiness does not destroy us; it gives us life, life that will last through death and into the resurrection unto life everlasting. This is our great comfort and our joy.

Amen