“The City of God: Pursuing His Holiness”

**Rev. 1:12-18**

(notes based on the sermon by Pastor Sean Hoisington, Hayden Bible Church, 10/10/21)

In the late 1800’s, Bishop J. C. Ryle wrote of some alarming characteristics that he noticed in the lives of Christians:

* Love of novelty
* Distaste of the old and regular
* Sensational teaching that led to the arousal of feelings
* A meek and quiet spirit had been forgotten (Matt. 5:5; 2Thess. 3:12)

He saw a church that thought of God as common, not holy. Their superficial understanding of God blinded them to who He really was. Did I mention this was the late 1800’s!? It sure sounds like today to me! (Q1)

A right view of God is ESSENTIAL to the carrying out of His mission. The church is to be all about the pursuit of a HOLY God. Is your God astonishing you? Is He awe inspiring to you? Our raison d’etre, our purpose, should be to pursue His holiness. (Q2)

The Apostle John was often described as “the disciple Jesus loved.” In Revelation 1, this same apostle was writing down this revelation he had received to send it on to the 7 churches, and also on to us. In 1:12-13 he writes of **the God-Man shepherding His church**. In the Gospel of John (10:27-29) he records Jesus saying, “The sheep hear My voice” and they know Him. He assures us that “no one will snatch” us “out of His hand.” We trust Jesus to give us everything we need to carry out His mission. 1:13 goes on to talk of **the eternal High Priest of God**, clothed in a robe with a golden sash. The Old Testament priests were insufficient. Here we meet the royal, Priest-King who will never die. He is the One without sin, ministering a New Covenant for His beneficiaries. The holiness talked of in 1:14 is different from righteousness. Righteousness has to do with God’s justice and moral purity. Holiness has to do with God being separate from and transcendent above His creation and His creation’s corruption. Do you really want to pursue God’s holiness? If you do, He’ll ruin the life you’ve lusted after, and replace it with a life worth living!

Jesus, our Holy God, is the **transcendent Judge over all**. He will judge the living and the dead (2Tim. 4:1-2). What should be our response to Him? You can’t hide your sin from Him (Heb. 4:13). We need to yield to Him (Ps. 139:23-24). We need to pursue His holiness. As a church and as individuals we should be oriented toward Him, not our own agendas. We should not be led off by our culture. We should constantly ask: Are our hearts aligned with the King of Glory?

Jesus, the Lamb of God, is **our overwhelming and victorious and authoritative King**. He controls His church and He controls the message of His church. He is **the Light of the World, shining into the darkness**. Everything is about Him! (Rom. 11:36) (Q3) Read 1:17-18 again. What was John’s response when He saw and heard this? He fell like a dead man! This was a common response in scripture. This same man who had leaned on Jesus’ bosom in the upper room was in this situation overwhelmed with the holiness of God… and we should be, too.

Pastor Sean told of trading in his sunglasses for polarized sunglasses for fly fishing. When he could finally SEE the fish, he became a much better fisherman. We can see better through the right lenses. Normal sunglasses just darken the view. The point? Looking through the lens of worldliness, the focus turns to man, not God. Ministries become man-pleasing, not God-centered. Looking through the lens of the pursuit of His holiness, our view of His mission is clear.

Do your lenses clarify your vision or darken your vision? EVERY ministry’s purpose at Hayden Bible Church is to polish those lenses so that all can see HIM clearly. We center on the Word, the Holy Bible, so that we can see our Holy God. Church is the pursuit of our Holy God. (Q4) (Q5)

**QUESTIONS**:

1. One reason I love this church is the reverence of our worship services. What makes worship reverent?
2. How does God inspire awe in you? How does He astonish you?
3. When I think of God’s holiness and majesty and grandeur, when I think of all God has done for me and is doing for me, when I think of eternity, I think of this verse. Church, meditate on this verse! (Rom. 11:36)
4. One might argue that the starting point of faith is the understanding that God is holy… and I am not! What should we do to help people get to this point?
5. Like the Church at Ephesus (Rev. 2:4), some have left their first love. How does this happen? What does it have to do with recognizing God’s holiness? What can keep us from drifting away due to distractions?

“Holy, Holy, Holy” (Heber)

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!

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 pow’r, in love, and purity.

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!