

“It’s an Inside Job”
Sunday August 23, 2009
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“This is an ugly sermon,” was Pastor Thomas’ warning as he started this week. It is never easy to hear about what we need to change in our lives, but it is what we need to grow, and this sermon is one of those.

Holiness is a condition. It is not a trend. It’s not a state of mind, and it certainly is not what comes naturally to us as human beings. Holiness is a consequence of a choice to follow God and allowing Him to mold us. It is a shift in who we are and how we act. It would be easy to have the wrong idea that holiness is a feeling. It is not. In fact, holiness often goes against what we naturally assume is right and what we feel. Holiness is defined and revealed to us by God, so to think that we can rely on our earthly emotions to determine what is holy goes against the very essence of what holiness is.

Leviticus 19:2

Speak unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say unto them, Ye shall be holy: for I the LORD your God [am] holy.

I Peter 1:16

Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.

While on a mission trip in Haiti, Pastor Thomas knew that he could not drink the water. His system was not adjusted to it, and drinking local water would cause some serious side effects. Through the whole trip, Pastor Thomas did very well and made sure to avoid the water. When he was offered a cold drink on a long hot afternoon, he chugged it down and then, to his horror, found a piece of ice in his drink. Because of that one piece of ice, Pastor Thomas said that he had never been so sick in his life.

What does an ice cube in Haiti have to do with holiness?

We typically don’t think of water as a very important or part of our day to day lives. Most Americans can just turn on their faucet and get a clean glass of water and never give it a second thought. We take it for granted. But the consequence of having contaminated water in our system can be very serious, and in this case it didn’t take a lot of water, just enough to make a single ice cube. It does not take much to contaminate our holiness, but the effect of contaminated holiness is nothing to take lightly. It will make us spiritually sick.

Pastor Thomas warned us about this pitfall: Don’t think that we can filter the word of God through our ideas, perspective, and feelings. So often as people, we just figure that if it feels right in our gut, that’s what we should do. As Christians, we know differently. God explains in the Bible that his ways are not our ways. In fact, they are higher than our

ways, and to assume that our natural man's gut would point us toward holiness is not true. The only thing that can direct us to holiness is God and his word. To think we can discern spiritual things with our earthly mind is to set ourselves up for failure.

Personal hygiene is part of our daily lives. There are aisles of products in convenience stores dedicated to cleaning our bodies, and those products are good. So if we spend that kind of energy cleaning our outward bodies, what should we do to make sure we are keeping our spiritual man clean? But that is not as simple as cleaning our physical bodies. How do we do it, and where do we start?

God's spirit cleans us. He is the only cleaning agent we will ever need, and our indicator of whether or not we have successfully been cleaned is the Bible. By reading and studying, God will make it clear to us whether or not we are keeping our holiness uncontaminated. We have to wash spiritually by coming before God every single day just like we have to bathe daily.

Matthew 23:27-28

27. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead [men's] bones, and of all uncleanness.

28. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.

We have to make sure that holiness is a part of our lives that comes from the inside out. Pastor Thomas reminded us that being religious and looking good is not enough.

In Mark chapter 11, we read a story about Jesus walking with his disciples and seeing a fig tree. He noted that it was not time in the season for figs yet, but since the leaves were in full bloom, he went over to the tree expecting fruit, but there was nothing on its branches. He cursed the tree and it withered away. Today in our spiritual lives we are like fig trees. It is not enough for us to look good and from a distance seem like "good Christians". We have to produce spiritual fruit (Galatians 5:22). If we're not doing that, it's not going to be good enough for God. There is nothing that can be applied to the outside of the tree to make it bear fruit either. It has to be something that comes from the inside out. Godly purity is the same way. It has to come from the inside out.

1 Thessalonians 4:3-4

3. For this is the will of God, [even] your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication:

4. That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour;

Did you know that when a train is at a complete stop on the track, something as small as a pebble can keep it from getting started. It's true. Once it is going full force, something like a pebble would never be able to get a train to stop, but it can keep it from getting started. What we think and feel can be like the pebble that on our spiritual track keeping

us from getting going. Once we learn from God what he wants from us by studying and through prayer, we would never let our thoughts and feelings stand in the way of doing what he wants us to do, but unless we have already set them aside to find that out from God, we may never get started.

Isaiah 5:1-7

1. Now will I sing to my wellbeloved a song of my beloved touching his vineyard. My wellbeloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill:
2. And he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a winepress therein: and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes.
3. And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard.
4. What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?
5. And now go to; I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard: I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; [and] break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down:
6. And I will lay it waste: it shall not be pruned, nor digged; but there shall come up briars and thorns: I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it.
7. For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts [is] the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant: and he looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry.

God has already removed the big problems in our lives. He has prepared us to serve Him, we just have to follow through.

I Corinthians 10:13

13. There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God [is] faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear [it].

God has also given us a promise that we will never be tempted in a way that will be more than we can stand and that he'll make a way for us to get out of it every single time.

Ever find yourself in a place where you can't get anything done and you ask God, "Why can't I God?" Many of us do. We have to remember that God wants us to be humble and willing to follow him. That's what Christians do. God doesn't ask our opinion (or our ideas, perspective, and feelings for that matter).

II Timothy 2:21

21. If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, [and] prepared unto every good work.

We have to purge ourselves from this world.

To bring ourselves into subjection is not pleasant. We have to go through the pain of purging things that are pleasurable to our flesh. Holiness is not simple. It's not easy, but

it is completely necessary. How would we feel if this year's Thanksgiving Day preparation just didn't include cleaning the turkey before it went into the oven? Many of us would quickly rethink our dinner plans, right? Of course we would! Just because cleaning the turkey is not an easy or particularly pleasurable experience does not mean we should neglect it. The same is true of cleaning our spiritual man to make sure that we are holy.

How do we change?

Leviticus 8:10-15

10. And Moses took the anointing oil, and anointed the tabernacle and all that [was] therein, and sanctified them.
11. And Moses took the anointing oil, and anointed the tabernacle and all that [was] therein, and sanctified them.
12. And he poured of the anointing oil upon Aaron's head, and anointed him, to sanctify him.
13. And Moses brought Aaron's sons, and put coats upon them, and girded them with girdles, and put bonnets upon them; as the LORD commanded Moses.
14. And he brought the bullock for the sin offering; and Aaron and his sons laid their hands upon the head of the bullock for the sin offering.
15. And he slew [it]; and Moses took the blood, and put [it] upon the horns of the altar round about with his finger, and purified the altar, and poured the blood at the bottom of the altar, and sanctified it, to make reconciliation upon it.

This is an Old Testament account of how we would make that change. Today in the New Testament church, things are a bit different. The oil that was used to anoint the tabernacle and everything in it is the spirit of God. God's spirit has to cover everything we do. And the blood that was accepted for the sacrifice for reconciliation is now the blood of Jesus Christ who was the perfect sacrifice for our sins today.

Leviticus 11:44

44. For I [am] the LORD your God: ye shall therefore sanctify yourselves, and ye shall be holy; for I [am] holy: neither shall ye defile yourselves with any manner of creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.

Acts 2:40

40. And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.

Philippians 2:12-13

12. Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.
13. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of [his] good pleasure.

Romans 12:2

2. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what [is] that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

What is God's way? What is holy, and what is spiritual? This is what the Bible says:

I Corinthians 6:11

11. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.

Romans 8:11

11. But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.

Ephesians 6:17-18

17. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:

18. Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;

John 17:17

17. Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.

John 8:32

32. And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

We become holy by reading and studying the Bible to know what is holy then acting on that knowledge.

John 1:12

12. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, [even] to them that believe on his name:

To become a son of God is like a caterpillar becoming a butterfly. It is a process. There is a lot of delicate attention that needs to be paid to the process in order for it to come out correctly. The process is a transformation. We have to let God's word change us from the inside out so we can be holy, sanctified, and fruitful.