

Sermon Title: "Jehovah Mekaddesh: Our God is Holy" Part 4 of 8
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(Exo 31:13 NRSV) "You yourself are to speak to the Israelites: "You shall keep my sabbaths, for this is a sign between me and you throughout your generations, given in order that you may know that I, the LORD, sanctify you."

(Lev 11:44-45 NRSV) "For I am the LORD your God; sanctify yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am holy. You shall not defile yourselves with any swarming creature that moves on the earth. {45} For I am the LORD who brought you up from the land of Egypt, to be your God; you shall be holy, for I am holy."

(1 Pet 1:15-16 NRSV) "Instead, as he who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct; {16} for it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy." (1 Pet 1:18-23 NRSV) "You know that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your ancestors, not with perishable things like silver or gold, {19} but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without defect or blemish. {20} He was destined before the foundation of the world, but was revealed at the end of the ages for your sake. {21} Through him you have come to trust in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are set on God. {22} Now that you have purified your souls by your obedience to the truth so that you have genuine mutual love, love one another deeply from the heart. {23} You have been born anew, not of perishable but of imperishable seed, through the living and enduring word of God."

Today we are in the fourth sermon in our series of eight sermons on the covenant names for God. We are exploring the covenant relationship or the redemptive relationship that we have with God. We began this series and looked at Jehovah Jireh, which means our God is our provider. Then we looked at Jehovah Rapha, our God is our healer. Last week we looked at Jehovah Nissi, our God is our banner over us. Today we want to look at Jehovah Mekaddesh. Our God is holy.

In the passage I read this morning from the book of Exodus, Moses is receiving instructions from God on how Moses is to lead the people of God. In that particular passage God told Moses He is a holy God and will sanctify His people and make them holy. One of the ways in which God sanctified His people was by declaring a Sabbath day, a holy day of rest. Just as God created the heavens and the earth in six days and rested, so also God is telling His people to labor for six days and rest one day per week. It was so important that the people of God understand this concept of resting and becoming holy as God is holy, that God said that anybody that did not keep His command would be cut off from Him. They would be dead. They would not be a part of the people of God. Now, please try to understand as you hear this, that God is not some arbitrary tyrant that says you must do as I do or you will be cut off. Rather, God is saying He is holy. Goodness and purity reside within Him. Because His nature is holy, those who come unto Him must be holy. Light dispels darkness. You do not have light and darkness at the same time. God is light and dispels sin, that is, darkness. To come unto God and to be with God and to have fellowship with God and to walk with God and to be God's people, means that you become like God, you become holy.

Then we read in Leviticus where God is speaking to His people. The people have all of these things that they must do in order to make themselves holy. They have a list of law and commands and there are things that they do and there are things that they should refrain from doing. The point is that they would be holy if they kept the laws. Remember, God said "I, your God am holy. You be holy."

Then I read the passage in I Peter, where the Apostle Peter is speaking to the New Testament church. What word does Peter use when he talks to the church about being the church? He quotes Leviticus. He says, "God is holy, you be holy." This has not changed. This has not changed. God is holy and He calls His people to be holy. Our God is a holy God. He is righteous. He is good. He is pure. He calls His people to be righteous, to be good, to be pure.

As I read the passage from I Peter, did you hear the good news? Peter announces to the church that we have been redeemed by Jesus. All of these laws that our ancestors, as Peter refers to them, all of the laws that they had to obey in order to become holy, . . . these have all been done away with. We have been set free from that bondage of all the things that you must do and all of the things you must refrain from, in order to become holy. Peter says we have been made holy by the blood of Jesus. Previously, God spoke and said through Moses that His people became holy by setting aside the Sabbath. Later in Leviticus the people were told to stay away from certain kinds of foods and to do other sorts of things. In doing these things they became holy. Now, Peter speaks to the New Testament church, to us, and he says those former things have been done away with. Now we are made holy and blameless and we are perfect in the eyes of God, we are pure, by the blood of Jesus. Peter goes on to say in this passage, that we have become pure as we grasped this truth and believed and made Jesus Christ our savior and our Lord and allowed His blood to sanctify us.

I would like to share this morning, two ways in which this truth about our holiness before God has worked out in my life. I remember that a year ago I was struggling through several issues in my life. Things were not going as well as I wanted them to go in my life. And I needed God to do some things for me and I had been praying to God as Jehovah Jireh, my provider. And I had been saying to God, "God this is what I need you to do in my life". I had this list of things that I needed Him to fix for me and to make right in my life. Every time I would pray I would hear God speaking to me, "What is your point?" I would respond to God, "God, my point is you are my provider and I am looking to you to meet these needs in my life." Then I would hear again as though God were saying to me, "What is your point?" I did not understand what was going on. I was finding myself very frustrated because I wanted God to meet these needs in my life. I wanted understanding about where I was going in life. Every time I would pray, I felt as God was saying, "What is your point?" It was as though God was wanting me to see beyond my immediate needs, but I did not understand exactly what He was saying until I read a passage of scripture in Hebrews 12.

(Heb 12:28-29 NRSV) "Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us give thanks, by which we offer to God an acceptable worship with reverence and awe; {29} for indeed our God is a consuming fire."

This passage brought back to my consciousness that indeed our God is a holy God. And that He has called me to be holy. He has committed Himself to burn out of me, to burn out of my life, anything that is not holy. My God is a consuming fire and He is committed to using every circumstance in my life and using all of His power to burn me up, to burn the dross that is within me . . . that I may be holy as He is holy. This thought is captured by Peter in the first part of First Peter , where Peter says your faith is more precious than gold though tested by fire. Our God has taken me through a time of testing. A time of fire . . . a time of consuming fire. As circumstances come into my life, as things go wrong in my judgment, my analysis, God is teaching me to ask Him, "Lord, what would you have me see in this circumstance, what are you teaching me in this circumstance?"

Often times when we get a headache, we will take some aspirin or some Tylenol to make the headache go away. Sometimes that is all that we need to do. However, we also need to recognize that having a headache is a symptom and we need to understand what is causing that headache. What is it a symptom of? It may be an anxiety headache. It may be a tension headache caused because we are trying so to control our life as opposed to trusting that God is at work in the midst of our lives. Do you see that connection? If we do not stop to ask, "Why I am I getting these headaches?" we will never understand the real problem in our life. God is teaching me to seek Him in His way. He's teaching me to ask Him questions so that He can give me insight of what He's trying to work out in my life, . . . what He wants me to let go of in my life that I might trust Him and seek Him above all things. God is a jealous God and He is a consuming fire as He burns out in my life anything that is not holy, because He is a holy God.

I can tell you that this is painful at times. It's a painful process at times when you recognize that you have an attachment to people or to things or to status and you are letting those people or those things or that status be your source of identity, who you are. God wants to burn that out of your life. He is burning it out of my life so that God becomes my all in all, the source of my life and of my joy and of my identity.

Our God is a holy God. He calls us to be holy. He is a consuming fire. He will burn out anything within us that is not holy.

The second way this truth is being worked out in my life has to do with my willingness for God's consuming fire to burn in my life. I am willing because I know that I have been made holy by the precious blood of Jesus Christ. God invites me to come into the holy of holies where He is, to have fellowship with Him and peace with Him. I do not have to wait until He consumes all of the stuff in my life that is not holy. I do not have to wait until then to have a relationship with God. I have that relationship today, because He has made me holy by the blood of Jesus. Then at the same time, He is going to burn out all of the stuff in me that becomes an obstacle to my awareness of His constant and abiding acceptance and love for me. Do you see that connection? God puts His arms around me, just as the heavenly Father put His arms around that son that came out of the pig farm, the prodigal son that came home smelling like a pig. He was dirty and covered with all sorts of grime and mud. The Father wrapped His arms around that son and said welcome. He put a robe on him and a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet and embraced him. God has made us holy by the blood of Jesus and He embraces us in our sin. He embraces us in our brokenness and welcomes us to where He is. That's the good news that I want you to hear this morning. God has made you holy by the blood of Jesus. He has committed Himself to taking anything out of our life that distracts from His holiness. But at the same time, He embraces us and welcomes us into His presence where we can find peace.

I remember learning a concept from Bill Gillham, in his book, "Lifetime Guarantee." He talked about our emotions being similar to a thermometer, or to a scale. He says when bad things happen to us, when we are hurt, when we are rejected, when we are abandoned, . . . our emotions go up on the scale like a rising thermometer. It takes a long time to get over the hurt and the pain that we experience in life. Gillham says that's like our emotions, or as he calls it, our feeler, getting stuck. Our emotions go all the way up to the top of the scale and have only come down a little bit and then something else happens in our life. Because our feeler is stuck, our emotions are going to rise over the top of the scale when we are hurt again. Wounds sometimes just do not seem to heal. The good news is our holy God who is pure and who loves us, just as we are, invites us to Himself when we are hurting and the pain of those wounds will not heal.

Sometimes the pain that we experience in life is a pain caused by our own making. Our own choosing . . . the sins in our life. Instead of dwelling with God where He is, we go off like the prodigal son and make our own way. The good news is that God in all of His holiness embraces us in the midst of all of our sin. I love the way the Apostle Paul puts it when he writes in the letter to the Colossians, (Col 3:3 NRSV) "for you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God."

Because of the blood of Jesus Christ covering us, we find ourselves hidden with God.

My favorite song writer, Dennis Jerigan, put this concept to a song I love dearly. When I am going through those difficult times in my life, I play this song and allow the words to minister to me, . . . to bring me back into the presence of God where I belong. Allow the Holy Spirit to bear witness to you the truth in these words:

When I cannot feel,
When my wounds don't heal,
Lord I humbly kneel
hidden in you.
Lord, you are my life, so I don't mind to die,
just as long as I'm hidden in you.
If I could just sit with you awhile.
If you could just hold me,
nothing could touch me.
Though I'm wounded, though I die,
if I could just sit with you awhile,
I need you to hold me,

moment by moment,
til forever passes by.

When I know I've sinned,
when I should have been crying out,
my God, hidden in you.
Lord I need you now, more than I know how.
So I humbly bow,
hidden in You.

If I could just sit with you awhile,
if you could just hold me,
nothing could touch me.
Though I'm wounded, though I die,
if I could just sit with you awhile,
I need you to hold me,
moment by moment,
til forever passes by.

This morning I invite you to celebrate the good news. The good news that we serve and we worship and we sing praises to:
Jehovah Jireh, the God who provides for us;

To Jehovah Rapha, the God who is our healer and makes us whole;

To Jehovah Nissi, the God who is the banner over us, our protector;

And to Jehovah Mekaddesh, our holy God who has made us holy by the blood of Jesus; who invites us to come into the very holy of holies where He dwells, where we find peace as He puts His arms around us and holds us moment by moment til forever passes by.