

Prayer of the Week:

Lord of all power and might, the author and giver of all good things: Graft in our hearts the love of your Name, increase in us true religion, nourish us with all goodness, and bring forth in us the fruit of good works; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

(Source: Book of Common Prayer 2019, Collects of the Christian Year, Proper Seven)

Prayer of Thanksgiving:

Almighty God, Father of all mercies, give you humble thanks for all your goodness and loving-kindness to us and to all whom you have made.

We bless you for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life; but above all for your immeasurable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ; for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory.

And, we pray, give us such an awareness of your mercies, that with truly thankful hearts we may show forth your praise, not only with our lips, but in our lives, by giving up ourselves to your service, and by walking before you in holiness and righteousness all our days; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory throughout all ages. Amen.



Holy - Week Three
Isaiah 6:1-8
Ezekiel 47:1-9

June 21, 2020

Recap

Holy means set apart and unique.

In the Bible, God, time, people, things, and places are all called holy. God's holiness doesn't distance us from him. Rather, it invites us to participate in his own holiness.

But, in the biblical narrative, this is not where the story starts. The story starts with an understanding that the holiness of God is dangerous and is incompatible with any impurity. The driving assumption under this system was that our impurities put God's holiness at risk.

Two Old Testament prophets have visions that change everything.....the first one if from Isaiah.

Isaiah's Temple Vision

In this passage, the prophet has a prophetic vision that is going to change everything. A prophetic vision is a picture in the mind's eye where God uncovers what is most real about the world.

In this vision, Isaiah is in God's presence in the temple, which he understands is dangerous.

A seraph took a coal from the altar and touched Isaiah's lips with it. If we've been paying attention to the whole system of purity laws, we know that Isaiah's impurity should be transferred to the coal!

Curiously, though, this is not what happens. The seraph touched Isaiah with a coal from the altar and then said, ***"Now that this has touched your lips, your guilt has departed and your sin is blotted out."***

God's holiness is transferred to Isaiah! ***This is a total reversal of the way holiness has been understood to this point!*** Perhaps God doesn't need to be protected from our impurity. Perhaps our impurity is endangered by God's holiness! Maybe it isn't our impurity that is the infectious agent. Perhaps it's God's holiness that is infectious.

About 100 years later, the prophet Ezekiel receives a prophetic vision....

Ezekiel's Temple Vision

In this vision, the prophet Ezekiel sees water flowing out of the temple toward the east.

This water from the temple brings life to all that touches it. Trees grow along its shores. Fish and wildlife teem in its waters. Eventually this river flows into the Dead Sea, bringing it to life.

This is significant because it used to be that you had to go to the temple and be pure to enter God's presence and worship. In this vision, the life-giving presence of God (represented by the river) flows out from the temple into creation! Again, this is a total reversal of how holiness has been understood up to this point.

But there is more. Ezekiel is careful to note that the river is flowing toward the east.

In biblical typology, eastward movement is movement away from God.

-In the Garden of Eden after Adam and Eve sin, they are kicked out to the East.

-After Cain killed Abel, he moved away from the presence of God to the East.

So, metaphorically, you have all of these people living in the East who have moved away from God and away from His ways. In Ezekiel's vision, the river flows from the temple of God toward the East to chase them down and bring life and purity! Oh LORD, may we let the river of your holiness catch up to us!