

Title of today's sermon is Relational Holiness. You have probably heard of positional holiness and personal holiness, but relational holiness? What does that mean?

Premise:

- If Jesus is the founder and owner and center of the Church... then the Church ought to look like Him.
 - The church gathered on Sunday and scattered on Monday should look like Jesus

Primary metaphors:

- The bride of Christ (shared identity; ever notice how a couple starts to think, act, even look like each other)
- The body of Christ (again shared identity; ever seen a body that didn't match its head)
 - Like some body builders (because you can't work out your head)
 - Some normal people (see picture!)



The church should look like Jesus

- We are supposed to represent Jesus to the world (ambassadors, image-bearers)
- Remember in Acts when the people in Antioch made up a name for the followers of Jesus ... They called them "Christians" ([Acts 11:26](#))
 - Not a self-given title... it was earned.
 - Given to them by the non-believing world as they observed them and judged them to be like Jesus

This is what Scripture calls us to do—to be like Jesus:

- Be imitators of God (Eph 5:1)
- Put on the Lord Jesus Christ (Rom 13:14)
- Be conformed to the image of Jesus (Rom 8:29)

The difficulty of disparity...

- Disparity = a great difference
- There is a great difference, often, between what Jesus looks like, and what the church (we) look like
- This causes great difficulty
 - For the church and for the world
 - We do not act like Jesus with one another, **or** toward the world
 - So there is disunity in the church and a bad witness to the world

But the church should look like Jesus (**from disparity to similarity**)

What does it look like to look like Jesus?

- There is a ton that we can talk about
- But this passage will help us start thinking and talking about this

Colossians 3:12-15

12 So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience;

13 bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.

14 Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity.

15 Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful.

This passage informs this idea of relational holiness

What is Relational Holiness?

- *How we relate to the world, and do relationships, like a Holy God, as the people of God?*
- *I.e. How can we be more like Jesus?*

This text reveals 3 things concerning relational holiness

- **The motivation**
- **The practice**
- **The power**

The Motivation:

12 So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved...

This particular verse is addressed to the Christian

- Notice that we are called **holy** and **beloved** (much loved)
 - We are not **loved** much because we are valuable, we are valuable because we are **loved** much
 - We are not **chosen by God** because we are **holy**, we are **holy** because we have been **chosen by God**

- This is positional holiness
 - What does this mean? (set apart)
 - How does this happen? (substitutionary atonement cf. 2 Cor 5:21)

Why tell a holy person to be compassionate and kind and humble and meek and patient???? Wouldn't those things define a holy person???

The concept here is to bring the practical in line with the positional

- What we are talking about is practical behavior that is the outflow of a positional reality
- That is the motivation: The work of the Cross

Because we are made **holy** by the Cross, we are to live in **holy** relationship with the world.

Everything that is good in the Christian life is rooted in who Christ is and what He has done:

- This changes everything.
- This means we are free to live a **compassionate, kind, humble, meek patient, forgiving and loving** existence
- Because our identity is secure and completely wrapped up in Jesus
 - He loves us, and we are accepted and perfect in Him.
- This means when the world rejects us it's okay
- Because our motivation to be **compassionate** is not so we can be accepted by the world because we are accepted by God
- We're not **kind** so we can get things in return, because we have been freely given all things through Christ.

Our identity is found completely in the fact that we are God's **beloved** and **made holy** by His act love toward us!

The Practice:

*What does relational holiness look like in practice?

The "go to" when talking about holiness is probably talking about things like

- We don't cuss, or smoke, or drink too much, look at pornography, gossip, sexual immorality
 - We often think of holiness in terms things we don't do

And that works... but for now, we will leave the "Thou shall not's..." and deal with some of the "Thou shall be's..."

They are right there in the text (12^b):

... put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience;

We are to be these things because Jesus is these things (again, identity issue—bride, body)

So what was Jesus like, to even the worst of people?

- **Compassionate** to the marginalized
 - Like the Lepers who had never felt human touch once deemed unclean.
 - It says time and time again in the Gospels that Jesus had compassion on people like this.
- **Kind** to the ostracized
 - Tax Collectors—He ate with them
 - Sexually Broken—He sat with them
 - Needy Children—He bid them come to Him
- **Humble** toward prideful and rebellious humanity
 - The Old Testament prophet Isaiah said that **a bruised reed He will not break, and a faintly burning wick he will not quench.**
 - He did not come to crush humanity but to save it. (Jn 3:17)
- **Gentle** with great failure
 - When He restored Peter as He made the disciples breakfast by the sea
- **Patient** with doubting seekers
 - Like to Nicodemus

This is who Christ is—and who we are to be! (Relationally Holy/Set Apart)

Jesus was so set apart they didn't know what to do with Him.

- He was the Son of God who came to take away the sin of the world, holy blameless and perfect.
- But He hung out with tax collectors and prostitutes...they called Him a wine bibber and a **friend of sinners.**
- Jesus was so personally engaged in the lives of broken people that the Religious people said, "**If only you KNEW who was touching you...**"
- However, He was so personally holy that His executioner said, "**I find no fault in Him.**"

The extreme Conservatives didn't know how to handle Him and the extreme Liberals were intrigued by Him.

CAN YOU IMAGINE if the Church was like this today!?

- Known as **both** socially just **and** radically holy
- We fed 100% of the hungry, **and** had a 0% divorce rate
- We stopped sex trafficking worldwide, **and** stopped having sex outside of marriage
- We preached Jesus, **and** we lived like Jesus

John Stott put it this way speaking to this **double identity** of the church, being both **called out** of the world to worship God and **sent back** into the world to witness and serve:

'Mission' arises, from the biblical doctrine of the church in the world. If we are not 'the church', the holy and distinct people of God, we have nothing to say because we are compromised. If, on the other hand, we are not 'in the world', deeply involved in its life and suffering, we have no one to serve because we are insulated. Our calling is to be 'holy' and 'worldly' at the same time. Without this balanced biblical ecclesiology we will never recover or fulfill our mission¹.

We are to be set apart in behavior, but also sent out in relationship

- When we talk about being holy like Jesus, **holiness ≠ separatist**
 - Set apart does not mean separate yourself from the brokenness of the world.
 - It's quite the opposite. We are to take our **beloved and holy** lives and stick them right into a concentration of sinners and rebels.

compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience

13 **bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.**

There is a standard of forgiveness.

- The bible is not vague or abstract about forgiveness.
- It does not just say "forgive" "love" ... But the bible sets a clear standard for the Church
- **"As the Lord forgave you."**
 - This is being **relationally holy**—forgiving like Christ

How did He forgive you?

- Totally. Undeservedly. In the face of hostility. Wronged while being right.

"But they betrayed me." You betrayed Jesus.

"But they hurt and wronged me...They're wrong!" The cross was an absolute injustice in every way.

"But they haven't asked for forgiveness." ...while we were yet sinners, Christ died for the ungodly

My sin always looks worse on other people.

- What God has forgiven me of, I find real hard to forgive others of
- Jesus tells a parable about this...

The Parable of the Unmerciful Slave (Matthew 18:21-35)

- Mt 6:12, 14-15
- Ending of parable = Not good

¹ John Stott, *The Living Church: Convictions of a Lifelong Pastor* (Nottingham: InterVarsity Press, 2007), 57.
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14 **Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity.**

And why do we love?

- Because we are Beloved! We love because we are loved.

And how do we love?

- In the way we have been loved.
- **The cross. Self-sacrificially**

1 John 4:10-12

10 **In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.** 11 **Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.** 12 **No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.**

- We see the motivation—We love because we are loved
 - We love the way we are loved.
 - Essentially, through the love of God abiding in us and us loving the way Jesus loved, the world will see God.
 - **Relational Holiness reveals the Holy God**
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Action Points:

- This is your part of the sermon
- Please don't just listen to sermons—do Christianity

What are you gonna do?

How are you gonna do it?

The Power

15 **Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful.**

The abiding persona and peace of Christ RULING and overruling our default modes to be religious and to falling back to our natural way of relating to the world—that old selfish way.

- Peace from striving and trying to
- Experience the power of the **Holy Spirit**
- Prayer Team