

Luke 5:1-11; 8:22-25 "The Holiness of Christ"[\[1\]](#)

Main Idea: This evening, we want to look at the holiness of Christ. Let's turn to Luke's gospel, and examine the illustrations and implications of a Holy Christ.

I. The Illustrations of the Holiness of Christ

A. Peter in Luke 5

1. The Request (4-5)
2. The Results (6-7)
3. The Response (8, 11)

B. The Disciples in Luke 8

1. Terrified by the Storm (22-24)
2. Terrified by Jesus (25)

II. The Implications of the Holiness of Christ

Because Christ is Holy, He is to be...

- A. Feared
- B. Trusted
- C. Served

God is holy. To be holy is to be different, unique, set apart, awesome. Is it important for us to study this subject, God's *holiness*? Indeed it is.

Just think of the implications. Because God is holy, He is One of a kind. He is awesome. And listen. A holy God is also terrifying and threatening to us. Why?

1 Samuel 6:20 asks the question, "Who can stand in the presence of the LORD, this holy God?" R.C. Sproul proposes, "Nothing terrifies us more than to be in the presence of the Holy One." Why? Two reasons. One, on our own, we are not holy. And two, God's holiness exposes us for who we really are.

Last week I looked at my shirt. It didn't look so bad *until* I held it up to the light, and then I saw the spaghetti stains. And the shirt went in the laundry basket.

E.g.—Remember Isaiah? "Woe is me, for I am undone."

But here's our problem. We don't think about God's holiness enough, and so we flatter ourselves and naively think we're okay.

Jonathan Edwards explains: "Almost every natural man that hears of hell, flatters himself that he shall escape it; he depends upon himself for his own security; he flatters himself in what he has done, in what he is now doing, or what he intends to do. Every one lays out matters in his own mind how he shall avoid damnation, and flatters himself

that he contrives well for himself, and that his schemes will not fail.”[\[2\]](#)

We need to understand the holiness of God.

Stephen Charnock made this observation, “It is less injury to [God] to deny His being, than to deny the purity of it; the one makes Him no God, the other a deformed, unlovely, and a detestable God...he that saith God is not holy speaks much worse than he that saith God is no God at all.”[\[3\]](#)

Think of the person who says, “Well, I’m no atheist! At least I believe in God!” Did you realize in a very fundamental way it’s better *not* to believe in God than to claim to believe in Him but not represent Him accurately by your life.

We’re learning about the holiness of God in our present series. We’ve seen the impact God’s holiness made on men like Isaiah, Job, Habakkuk, and last time Moses. Once confronted with the holiness of God, these men were never the same again.

Objection: “Those men were all in the OT. We live in the New Testament era, the age of grace. We relate to God differently in our day.”

Is that true? No. And to show biblically that it’s not true, we want to look at the New Testament in this message. We’re going to gaze upon the holiness of Christ. Let’s turn to Luke’s gospel, and examine both some illustrations and implications of a holy Christ.

I. The Illustrations of the Holiness of Christ

We want to look at two fascinating and familiar stories. But they’re more than stories. I would suggest they are illustrations of Christ’s holiness.

A. Peter in Luke 5

The Setting: Luke 4 reveals that Jesus’ public ministry had just begun (4:14). The crowds flocked to Him (4:15, 22). His fame spread throughout Galilee . The people of His home town of Nazareth rejected him (4:28).

He left and went to Capernaum (4:31). There He preached, cast out demons, and healed many of diseases and infirmities. Particularly, He healed Simon Peter’s mother-in-law. The result was that the curious crowds mobbed Him. People kept Him up all night healing and helping them. Jesus had no privacy (4:42).

Which brings us to our first story...

Verses 1-3 “One day as Jesus was...”

Notice the details. Luke records that people pressed on Jesus while He was teaching by the Lake of Gennesaret (that’s the Sea of Galilee). He saw two boats that would provide a natural amphitheater. The fishermen had had a long night of fishing, with no success, and now they were washing out their nets. Jesus hopped on board Simon’s boat, and used this floating pulpit to address the people on shore.

G. Campbell Morgan says we should be careful not to confuse this story with the event recorded in Matthew 4 and Mark 1. That is the account where Jesus called Simon and his brother to leave his fishing business, and follow Him. That event happened a couple of weeks before the one in Luke 5. What had Simon done in Luke 5? He had gone back to fishing. And he wasn’t having too much success either.

Then Jesus surprised him with a most unusual request.

1. The Request (4-5)

V 4 "Now when He had ceased...Let down your nets..." I said that was an unusual request. Why? Remember 3 things...

--Peter was a professional fisherman. Fishing was not a hobby.

--He'd already fished all night, with no success. Empty nets.

--He'd just cleaned up his equipment. He'd have to "redo" that.

I chuckle at Sproul's suggestion of what went through Peter's mind when Jesus made this request. Peter must have thought, "Jesus, you're a great Teacher, the best I've ever heard. And when it comes to healing, there's none better than you. But listen. I'm a professional fisherman. Give me some credit! I may not know much about religion, but I do know fishing. I've fished all night, and there are no fish to be caught. But...to humor you, okay..."

I don't know if that's what Peter thought or not. But listen to what he said...in verse 5, "Master (i.e. Captain), we have worked hard all night and haven't caught anything... But because you say so, I will let down the nets."

What a great response! Peter didn't understand. But he obeyed. He took Jesus at His word, and acted. "Nevertheless, AT THY WORD I will let down the net."

There's the request. What happened?

2. The Results (6-7)

Talk about dramatic results! First, nearly every fish in the Sea of Galilee (or so it seemed) jumped in Peter's net (6)! Next, Peter's nets were so full they began to break (6). So Peter called for backup help from his partners in the other boat (7). And finally, both boats took on so many fish they began to sink (7)! Wow! That's results!

Here's a sidelight, yet an important point. Remember Peter's natural reaction to Jesus' request, "Jesus, I'm a professional fisherman. You're great when it comes to religious things, but I can handle secular things on my own." Do we ever do that? Be careful not to compartmentalize your life. "This area is sacred. This area is secular. Jesus is interested in my religious life, but I can handle my business life." Friend, Jesus is just as concerned with your job life as He is with your church attendance. He wants us to trust and obey Him in both.

You say, What does this story have to do with the holiness of Christ?" Watch what happened next. The response of Peter...

3. The Response (8, 11)

Remember, Jesus merely spoke a word and Peter's fishing nets were stuffed full. Don't forget, Peter is a businessman, a Jewish businessman. He puts bread on the table by catching fish. How would you expect Peter to respond?

"Jesus, come here. How about signing this fishing contract? Let's go into a 50-50 partnership. All I'm asking is 5 minutes a month of your time..."

Was that Peter's response? No.

Verse 8 "When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, 'Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!'"

Did you see that? Peter pleaded with Jesus to *leave* him! Depart! Why? The reason is clear. When Peter saw what Jesus did, he realized the startling truth that Jesus is different. Jesus is unique. Jesus is in a class all by Himself. Jesus is holy!

Listen carefully. To be in the presence of One who is holy is unnerving. In fact, it's terrifying. Do you know why? Why did Peter ask Jesus to leave him? Hear him: "For I am a sinful man." Peter crumbled when he realized the startling truth that Jesus is holy.

When was the last time you painted inside your home? When you're done, you feel pretty good about yourself. Until you take a spotlight, and shine it on the wall, and you see all the blemishes, the drips, the spots you missed. The blemishes don't show up...until you turn on the bright light.

That day Peter stood before Christ, the brilliant light of Jesus' holiness revealed every sin-tainted spot in his life. And he was petrified with astonishment (9).

Choice: When you realize that Christ is holy, you have a choice to make...

- a. You can either reject Him out of fear and shame. Or...
- b. You can receive Him, and surrender your life to Him and His will.

Which did Peter do?

V 10 Jesus: "Fear not; from henceforth you shall catch men."

V 11 Peter: "...they forsook all and followed Him."

We've seen one illustration of Christ's holiness. Now one more...

B. The Disciples in Luke 8

You will probably remember this story. Let me bring you up to date on what's been happening. Jesus has called the 12 disciples. They've traveled with Him. They've heard Him preach. They saw Him heal the centurion's servant and raise the widow's son from the dead in chapter 7. The crowds continued to demand Jesus' time.

Jesus informed His disciples that they were going to move on to a new location for ministry. They would travel by boat, at night.

Now do you recall what happened? Let's read the account...

Verse 22 "Let's go to the other side of the lake..."

Jesus had more than one reason for this trip. One was because of the crowds. The second was because of the disciples. He wanted to teach them a lesson they'd never forget!

Verse 23 "But as they sailed, He fell asleep..."

The Sea of Galilee is pear shaped, 13 miles long and 8 miles wide. Its surface is actually 700' below sea level. A wind tunnel exists between the desert-like transjordan region to the east, and the Mediterranean Sea to the west. Because of that, sudden, violent storms can break out instantly, with no warning.

That's what happened in Luke 8. Verse 23 is precise when it says, "A squall came down on the lake.." Here's the first thing that happened to the disciples. They were...

1. Terrified by the Storm (22-24)

Mark in his Gospel tells us that Jesus had fallen asleep in the stern of the boat (Mark 4:38). Do you know anybody like that, who can sleep anywhere??!

Picture the scene. The howling wind. The raging sea. The sleeping Master. And the frantic disciples! Remember several of these men were skilled fishermen who had spent much of their life sailing on this sea. But they're petrified, terrified by this storm.

Watch what they did in verse 24. They went to Jesus. They woke up Jesus. And they said to Jesus, "Master, master, we perish." (NIV "we're going to drown!")

Now watch what Jesus did. I marvel at Jesus' nonchalant manner (You never see Jesus rushed or frantic, but very deliberate and purposeful). He got up (24). Then He "rebuked the wind and the raging of the water." Mark's gospel tells us what He said, "Peace, be still."

What happened? There was instant calm. One moment the waves pounded against the boat. The next the surface of the lake was as smooth as glass. Then Jesus asked his disciples a question...

Verse 25—"Where is your faith?"

You may be thinking, "Wasn't Jesus a little hard on the disciples? I mean their reaction was normal, wasn't it? They were terrified by the storm!"

What was the disciples problem? G. Campbell Morgan says they made the mistake of waking Jesus! What's wrong with that, you say? Morgan says, "There was no need to wake Him. Why? Do you think any boat can go down if Christ is on board?!" (p. 111)

What had Jesus told the disciples in verse 22? "We're going to the other side of the Lake !" What does verse 26 say, "And they arrived."

Make it personal. Do we take the Lord's word seriously? Every detail? Every promise? Why do we worry then? There are a lot of Christians today who seem to think "the boat is going down"! Friends, if you're a Christian, the boat cannot go down if the Master does not will it to go down. He is on board.

How did the disciples respond when they saw Jesus still the sea? Did they throw a party? Did they shout, "Way to go Jesus!" No.

Verse 25 says, "In fear and amazement..." First the disciples were terrified by the storm. Then they were terrified by Jesus. In fact, they were more afraid AFTER the storm than before it!

2. Terrified by Jesus (25)

The climax of the story is not the miracle, but the disciples' question in verse 25, "In fear and amazement they asked one another, 'Who is this? He commands even the winds and the water, and they obey him.'" The KJV puts it, "What manner of man is this?!"

What were the disciples saying? Who is this Jesus?! He is different. We don't have a category for Him. He's unique, one of a kind, awesome. He's completely in control of Himself and His environment. He's holy!

So the holiness of Christ filled the disciples with terror. It's true. Holiness makes people uncomfortable.

R.C. Sproul tells the following story on his video series, "*The Holiness of God.*" A man won PGA golf tournament one year. As part of his award, he was given the privilege at the next year's event to play a practice round of golf with Jack Nicklaus, the President, and Billy Graham. When the guy came after his 18 hole round, a friend of Sproul's was there to greet him. He went up to the privileged golfer, and asked, "How'd it go?" The man was furious. "I hated it. I didn't need to have Billy Graham shoving religion down my throat for 18 holes."

The guy took out his anger on a bucket of balls at the practice driving range. When the balls were gone, the friend went up to him again, "So Billy really came on strong, huh?" The golfer answered, "No. Actually, he didn't say a word about religion. I just had a bad day."

What happened? Listen. Holiness threatens us. Holiness unnerves us. When one who is holy enters our presence, we feel uncomfortable.

The Bible says, "The wicked flee when no man pursues." (Prov 28:1). Billy Graham didn't have to say a word about Christianity to make this man uncomfortable. His presence alone did that. Not because he himself is holy, but because he represents One who is holy!

We've seen two illustrations of the holiness of Christ. Now...

II. The Implications of the Holiness of Christ

Because Christ is Holy, three responses are in order. Because He is holy, He is to be...

A. Feared

Do you think of Jesus Christ merely as your "friend," your "buddy"? Or is there awe and fear in your heart as you consider His Holiness? If not, you have created an "idol" Christ, a false Christ.

O please know that Jesus of Nazareth was more than "do-gooder" that galley-vamped around Galilee saying nice things and making people feel good about themselves. He is the Sovereign King of the Universe!

Because Christ is holy, He is to be feared. The disciples feared Him. Hear the Word of God...

Proverbs 1:7 "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge."

Philippians 3:22 "Work out your salvation with fear and trembling."

1 Peter 2:17 "Honor all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God..."

Do you fear the Lord? You should. Because He's awesome. He's powerful. He's holy.

Objection: "Well since He's holy, and I'm not, there's no hope for me. I might as well grab all the gusto I can in life, and make the best of things."

That's not the solution. This is. First Jesus is to be feared. Second He is to be...

B. Trusted

What did Jesus say to Peter? Luke 5:10 "Fear not."

What did Peter do? Luke 5:11 He "forsook all and followed Him."

Listen to what Jesus invites us to do. Matthew 11:28 "Come unto Me all you that labor...I will give you rest." What's the right way to respond to the Holy Christ? He is to be feared, trusted,

C. Served

That's what Peter and the disciples did. They feared, trusted, and served Jesus.

What about you? This evening, we've seen that Christ is holy. The holiness of Christ terrifies and threatens us. It makes us uncomfortable for it reminds us of our sinfulness.

You now have a choice to make.

1. *You can be like Peter and say, "Depart from me."* Lots of people do just that. Perhaps you are. You want Jesus to leave you alone. You try to run from Christ. You attempt to ignore His holiness. You try to cover up your guilt and shame by filling your life with things to make you forget your unholiness.

In light of Christ's holiness, that's one option you have. The Bible, however, beckons us to respond this way...

2. *You can ask Christ to make you holy.* That's why He came into the world, according to Hebrews 10:14, "Because by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy." If you will trust in Jesus and in His atoning work on the cross, God will give you the merit of Christ's righteous life, and He will begin to transform you into His holy likeness. Then you can serve Him as a holy instrument in the Redeemer's hands.

******Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church . It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

[1] I am indebted to the teaching of R. C Sproul for many of the insights shared in this series of messages. I highly recommend his video series and book on the subject.

[2] Jonathan Edwards, quote taken from R. C. Sproul, *The Holiness of God*, p. 252.

[3] Stephen Charnock, *The Existence and Attributes of God*, p. 449.