

Text: Isaiah 65:1-9

Theme: "Too Holy"

Date: The Second Sunday after Pentecost, series C

June 19, 2022

The pot is calling the kettle black. That is the phrase that we say when someone is talking about someone else but in truth they are really describing themselves. There are two things that we tend to do in our lives when we realize that we are not as good as we want to be and that we really are not what we would like to be. We try to avoid anyone who might call us to account and we try to transfer to others guilt for what we have done. Nobody likes to be confronted with their faults or face the consequences for them so we avoid anybody that would be in a position to do this. If we can't avoid the one who calls us into account, then we will somehow try to put the blame on something or someone else. How often have we done that in our lives? Are there certain people that you want to avoid because they may make you face what you do not want to face?

This is how we act toward God so often in our lives. Listen to what the people are saying to God in the Old Testament Lesson: "Keep to yourself, do not come near me, for I am too holy for you." It is certainly understandable why anyone would ask God to keep away from them. We want God to keep to Himself because He seems to be getting in the way of what we want. We don't want to follow His Laws. His Law so often won't allow us to do what makes us happy and feel good. With God in our lives, then there are rules. There are certain behavior expectations within the body of Christ. Most of what God gives us in His Law goes against the desires of the flesh. Certainly, there are those who say to God "Keep to yourself" because they do not want to live their lives the way they want to. This even happens in the church. It is so easy and tempting to twist the Word of God to make it say what we want it to say. God makes the rules. God determines right and wrong.

God makes the rules and God is certainly the one who calls us into account. Not only does God call us into account for all that we say and do but also for what we think. Certainly, this would want to make us hide from God. Nobody wants to face consequences for their actions. Certainly, a fear of God's judgment will make us want to avoid God.

Yet, it is what the people are saying to God that is noteworthy here: "I am too holy for you." Imagine claiming to be more holy than God. Nothing could be further from the truth. The truth is that God is too holy for us. God's holiness is beyond human comprehension. In God's holiness and presence, sinners like you and me do not stand a chance. We may think that we are holy and are doing a reasonably well job of living a holy life and keeping God's commandments, but when we are in the presence of God, we realize all the more how far we have fallen short of the goal. The holiness of God is something that is unbearable for the sinner and can knock the sinner down in an instant so hard that he would not know what hit him.

Certainly, we are going to say to God, "Keep to yourself, do not come near me." But God is not going to do that. God has every intention of seeking us out and calling us to account for what we have done. Adam and Eve tried to run from God but God ran faster than they did and God

caught up to them. Our Lord speaks about being ready to be sought by those who did not ask for Him. The truth is that God always makes the first move. God knows that if He were to wait for us to come to Him, He would wait forever because we have no natural desire to come to Him. Yet, God wants to restore the broken relationship that we have with Him. We ruin the good relationship with God by our sin and yet God is the one who really wants to restore the broken bond and make things go back to the way they were before we had the falling out.

But there is still the issue of God's justice and holiness. God's nature is that He calls us into account for what we have done and what we have failed to do and God's holiness is too much for the sinner to endure. God wants to show compassion and yet must be true to His nature as holy and just.

Yes, God is too holy for us. So, when God confronts us, He does not come at us with full holiness and glory. We read how God the Son emptied Himself taking on the very nature of a servant. Jesus would come down from heaven to dwell with unholy people like you and me. God uses enough glory and holiness to bring us to our knees but not so much that we cannot endure. So, we come to God and admit that He is too holy for us and we don't pass the blame but admit that we deserve to be called into account for what we have done. Yes, we admit that God is too holy for us but the good news is that God is going to do something about that.

"Keep to yourself for I am too holy for you." Yes, we like to transfer our guilt and shame on to others. Perhaps we even like to do that with God. Adam tried to blame God for his sin: The woman You gave me. And yet, God is going to allow us to transfer our guilt and shame to Him. God is going to send His Son into the world and absorb the guilt and shame of our sin upon Himself. On the cross Jesus has upon Himself all your unholy thoughts, words and deeds. Jesus pays the price for your sin and when He rises again on the third day, He makes it clear that your sin is forgiven and your unholiness is gone. Jesus allows us to transfer our guilt to Him and He then transfers His holiness to us.

We no longer need to say to God, "Keep away from me." We can now stand in God's presence. St. Paul says to us today, "As many of you were baptized into Christ have put on Christ." At Baptism the blessings won for us and the cross and at the empty tomb are delivered to us. Now when we enter into God's presence, we have the protective clothing of God's righteousness and holiness. Even though we are still sinful and still repent of our sin, God see us without sin and treats us as such.

We are treated as sons of God. Here the term son is used in the legal sense and not the biological sense. Since we are sons of God, not only can we go into His presence without fear but we have access all of the good things that He has to give us. Now that we are sons of God who are covered in Christ's righteousness and holiness, we can now, with the help, power and grace of the Holy Spirit, do those things that God would want us to do and delight in doing God's Law.

Yes, we want to keep away from God because His holiness is just too much to endure. Yet, God does not want to keep away from us and He reveals Himself to those who have no desire to seek Him and He finds them. And when God finds us, He changes us. Through Baptism we receive the holiness of God and now become temples of the Holy Spirit to live out that holy life that God

would want us to live and look to the eternal life in heaven prepared for all those who are sons of God through faith in Jesus Christ.

In Jesus' name. Amen.