

Readings

Scripture

¹The Lord reigns; let the peoples tremble! He sits enthroned upon the cherubim; let the earth quake! ²The Lord is great in Zion; he is exalted over all the peoples. ³Let them praise your great and awesome name! Holy is he! ⁴The King in his might loves justice. You have established equity; you have executed justice and righteousness in Jacob. ⁵Exalt the Lord our God; worship at his footstool! Holy is he!

⁶Moses and Aaron were among his priests, Samuel also was among those who called upon his name. They called to the Lord, and he answered them. ⁷In the pillar of the cloud he spoke to them; they kept his testimonies and the statute that he gave them.

⁸O Lord our God, you answered them; you were a forgiving God to them, but an avenger of their wrongdoings. ⁹Exalt the Lord our God, and worship at his holy mountain; for the Lord our God is holy!

- Psalm 99 (English Standard Version)

Reflection

The primary meaning of holy is "separate." It comes from an ancient word that meant, "to cut," or "to separate." Perhaps even more accurate would be the phrase "a cut above something." When we find a garment or another piece of merchandise that is outstanding, that has a superior excellence, we use the expression that it is "a cut above the rest."

God's holiness is more than just separateness. His holiness is also transcendent. The word transcendence means literally "to climb across." It is defined as "exceeding usual limits." To transcend is to rise above something, to go above and beyond a certain limit. When we speak of the transcendence of God, we are talking about that sense in which God is above and beyond us. Transcendence describes His supreme and absolute greatness. The word is used to describe God's relationship with the world. He is higher than the world. He has absolute power over the world. The world has no power over Him. Transcendence describes God in His consuming majesty, His exalted loftiness. It points to the infinite distance that separates Him from every creature. He is an infinite cut above every thing else.

When the Bible calls God holy it means primarily that God is transcendentally separate. He is so far above and beyond us that He seems almost totally foreign to us. To be holy is to be "other," to be different in a special way.

- R.C. Sproul, *The Holiness of God* (p. 54-55)

As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy."

- 1 Peter 1:14-16 (English Standard Version)

Sermon Outline

His Holiness
Psalm 99

Vintage Vinyl
Brad Anderson

The Lord creates a way of grace for his people... (Psalm 99:6)

What does Psalm 99 reveal about the God who creates a way of grace?

That God is unmatched in his holiness... (Psalm 99:1-5)

That God is unmatched in his humility... (Psalm 99:6-9)

Reflection Questions (taken in part from the Serendipity Study Bible for Groups)

- Read Psalm 99 aloud as a group. What does it mean to call God "holy"? Why would this lead someone to worship God? How are his holiness and grace related?
- In Psalm 99, God is praised for his holiness. How is God's holiness expressed in verses 1-3? In verses 4-5? What do the references in verses 6-7 recall? Use a verse cross-reference in your Bible to find the related passages and to explore the image the psalmist recalls?
- How can a holy god get his "hands dirty" dealing with humans? How did God respond to intercessors in verse 8? In what way is God more than just a mighty being?
- What does the phrase "a cut above" mean? What phrases do you use to describe something that is uniquely special and distinct?
- How and when have you experienced God's holiness?
- Read the quote by R. C. Sproul. What difference does it make that God is higher than the world, has absolute power over the world and that the world has no power over him?
- Where do you see the nearness of God in this Psalm? How is God's nearness to his people a source of comfort?