

Sermon Outline

PEOPLE OF HIS HOLY, LIFE-GIVING PRESENCE: THE PROVIDENCE VISION, PART TWO

*1 Peter 2:4-5, 9-10;
Ephesians 4:10-12; Matthew 5:14-16;
Philippians 2:12-13; 2 Corinthians 12:7*

The Providence Vision:
“A household for our triune God,
where each member shines forth His holy, life-giving presence.”

I. The Church as God’s Servant to Mankind

II. Each Family Member Matters (Ephesians 4:10-12; 1 Peter 2:4-5, 9-10)

- A. Three Bible passages that teach this truth are Ephesians 4:10-12; 1 Peter 2:4-5, 9-10.
- B. 1 Peter 2:9-10: We are God’s chosen, holy, royal, and priestly nation.
- C. 1 Peter 2:4-5: We are a household of priests, who offer spiritual sacrifices to God.
- D. Ephesians 4:10-12: The work of ministry belongs to each holy one in God’s house.
 1. God has given to the Church apostles, prophets, pastors, and teachers (4:11).
 2. God gives these people “to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ” (4:12).
- E. When we put Ephesians 4 and 1 Peter 2 together, a picture emerges. —God’s household is one where every member is a priest—a servant to God and a servant from God to one another.
- F. Here are some questions for us to think about.
 1. How do you see yourself contributing to the life of this Church?
 2. How do you think your interests can be used for the encouragement of your brothers and sisters in this Church?

3. Are you willing to grow in your service? To develop new interests and strengths that you never had, so that you can better serve God's people?

***Questions for reflection:** (1) What do each of the three Bible passages examined here—Ephesians 4:10-12; 1 Peter 2:4-5, and 1 Peter 2:9-10—teach us about who we are? (2) How does 1 Peter 2:4-5 connect the themes of priesthood and God's house? (3) What conclusions can we draw when we put Ephesians 4 and 1 Peter 2 together? What is the work of each priest-member in God's household?

III. Each Family Member, a Holy Light to the World (Matthew 5:14-15)

- A. Each member of God's Church must also realize that God has called us to extend our service beyond the walls of our own community and into the world.
- B. Matthew 5:14-15 is our Lord's job description to his disciples.
—"You are the light of the world...let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven."
- C. What is the purpose of light? When do people need light?
 1. People need light when visibility is low, and they are looking for something.
 2. People need light when they are afraid.
- D. What kind of guidance does the world need?
 1. The world needs guidance back to God.
 2. The world needs guidance in the will of God.
- E. Since the world needs to be guided back to God, the most precious gift the Church can give the world is the Word of God.
 1. We teach the Word by preaching and other forms of verbal instruction.
 2. We teach the Word also by our good works; by providing the world with flesh-and-blood examples of what it means to be children of God.
- F. As God's light to the world, we are also called to bring *comfort* to its inhabitants.
—We bring the comfort of the Gospel of Christ.

***Questions for reflection:** (1) According to Matthew 5:14-15, what is the job description that Jesus has given to his disciples? (2) How does the Church in general and Christians in particular function as light to the world? (3) How do we teach God's Word to the world?

IV. Our God Shines through Us (Philippians 2:12-13; 2 Corinthians 5:20)

- A. As we do the good works that God has given us, we realize there is more to the picture than *us*.
- B. Philippians 2:12-13: It is God who works in us to will his will.
1. Paul calls us to work out our salvation with fear and trembling.
 2. Why can we do good works to begin with?
—“for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.”
- C. 2 Corinthians 5:20: It is God who appeals through us.
1. Paul says that God speaks through the apostles and their fellow evangelists.
—“Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, *God making his appeal through us...*”
 2. This doesn't mean that God manipulates the evangelists like puppets.
 3. While the apostles and the evangelists speak in their own language and use their own words and forms of expression, it is God who speaks through them.
 4. This principle is applicable also to the rest of the Church.
- D. 1 Corinthians 12:7: It is God the Spirit who manifests himself through us.
1. Paul teaches that even though there are many kinds of spiritual gifts, it is the same God who generates these gifts in everyone (12:4-6).
 2. 12:7: “To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.”
- E. Conclusion: While we serve God as his priests to the Church and to the world, it is our God who works through us.

***Questions for reflection:** (1) As we serve the Lord, what realization gradually dawns on us? (2) What does Philippians 2:12-13 teach us about the relationship between our work and God's? (3) According to 1 Corinthians 12:7, who is manifested when we practice our spiritual gifts?

V. The Holy and Life-Giving Presence (Isaiah 6:3; Revelation 4:8)

A. We must also consider what kind of presence and power we are dealing with.

—*This is the presence of the holy, life-giving God himself.*

B. Our triune God is holy.

1. To say that God is holy means...
 - a. that he is other, unique, foreign, and vastly beyond our kind.
 - b. that he is morally perfect; utterly good and righteous.
2. Because God is holy, we must revere and respect his presence in us.
3. Isaiah 6 gives us a vision into God's holiness.
 - a. God is "Holy, holy, holy" (6:3; see also Revelation 4:8).
—His holiness is supreme and unrivaled.
 - b. Because God is holy, he is also eternally set against all that is evil.
 - c. In the fiery glory of God's presence, Isaiah realizes his sinfulness and despairs: "Woe is me!" (6:5).
 - d. That is the effect of God's holiness on sinners. It brings us into utter shame, utter horror, and utter disintegration.
 - e. In his mercy, God does not destroy Isaiah, but cleanses him.
 - f. But God's mercy does not come without some kind of destruction—Isaiah's lips had to be scorched by holy coals (6:7).
 - g. In our case, Christ had to be destroyed to achieve our cleansing.

C. Our triune God is also life-giving.

1. Long before God assumed the aspect of a judge and warrior, he revealed himself as Creator; that is, Architect, Artist, Builder, Engineer, and Father.
—God's holiness is a life-giving, life-restoring holiness.
2. If this were not the case...
 - a. commandments like "You shall not murder" (Ex 20:13) will make no sense.
 - b. Jesus would not have come to give life abundantly (Jn 10:10)
 - c. there would be no new creation, no new heavens or new earth (2 Pet 3:13).
—God's holiness overflows with eternal and undiluted *life!*
3. God destroys evil doers only because they destroy his glory in the world.
4. God intends for his holiness to engulf the world, sanctifying and renewing everything in sight (Zech 14:20).

***Questions for reflection:** (1) What does God’s holiness mean? (2) What does Isaiah’s experience in God’s throne hall teach us about God’s holiness? (3) God’s mercy is always accompanied by the destruction of evil. What does this say about God’s holiness? (4) Why do we say that God’s holiness is “a life-giving, life-restoring holiness”?

VI. Holy and Life-Giving, Just as He Is

- A. Since God is holy and life-giving, the people through whom he shows himself will also become like him
—*We will become holy and life-giving persons as well.*

- B. Of course, God’s holiness and ability to give life are on a far greater scale than ours.
—Westminster Shorter Catechism 4: “God is a Spirit, *infinite, eternal, and unchangeable*, in his...holiness...goodness...”

- C. But this is not to say that we cannot imitate God in some way.
—We are holy and life-giving in ways that are appropriate to ourselves as God’s creatures (Lev 19:2).

- D. We strive to be holy persons by...
 - 1. by being “other” from the world; by separating ourselves from sin (2 Cor 7:1).
 - 2. by being devoted to God above all.
 - a. We seek to know and do God’s will in all situations of our lives.
 - b. We cherish God’s glory as our highest priority in life.

- E. We strive to be life-giving persons.
 - 1. We cannot give life in the same way God can.
—We cannot create out of nothing, or resurrect anyone.

 - 2. But we can give life in terms of help, strength, and comfort.

 - 3. We give help, strength, and comfort by...
 - a. Teaching the Word of God to one another (Col 3:16).
 - b. Treating one another with respect and esteem—in Christ (2 Cor 5:16).
 - c. Encouraging one another (1 Thess 5:11).
 - d. Rebuking—but always helpfully and in sincere love.

- e. Doing deeds that bring delight and refreshment to God's people (Ex 23:12; Prov 15:30; 2 Cor 7:13; 2 Tim 1:16).
4. Ask: Since the Church is the community that would inherit the new earth, how would that look like? Would that look like a frightened church or a church that is exuberant and alive?

***Questions for reflection:** (1) If God is life-giving and holy, what would happen to the people through whom he works? (2) According to the Westminster Shorter Catechism, how is God's holiness and goodness different than ours? (3) How do we strive to be holy persons? (4) How is our life-giving different from God's? (5) How do we give life to people?

VII. God in All and Through All

God's vision for our Church calls for individual intentionality and effort. It calls us all to apply ourselves to the sacred task; to strive to be holy, life-giving priests to the Church and to the world. However, our triune God also invites us to see that he himself is that holy, life-giving Lord who works in and through us to accomplish his goals—the final sanctification of his people and the exaltation of his Name.

“For from him and through him and to him are all things.

To him be glory forever.

Amen”

(Romans 12:36 ESV)