

## Kings Norton Baptist Church

Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> January 2024 10 am

Called to be Holy - Motto text sermon – 1 Cor 1:2

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Welcome to all

Opening Scripture Isaiah 6:1-3

Hymn MP 237 Holy, Holy, Holy

Scripture Psalm 1 (page 543)

Prayer

Chorus MP 590 Seek ye first the kingdom of God

Church Covenant reading

Notices Bible reading plan, Fellowship lunch, Thursday, BCM email

Prayer and Lord's prayer

Readings Psalm 101:1-7 (page 604)

I Corinthians 1:1-3 (page 1144)

Hymn MP 488 O breathe of life come sweeping through us

Sermon *Called to be Holy!*

Hymn CH 821 Another year has just begun.

Closing Prayer: Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen." Eph 3:20-21

Close

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Motto text: **To the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be holy.** 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 1:2

Alternative hymn MP 201 Guide me O though great Jehovah

Alternative reading Isaiah 35 (page 719)

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## Prayer and Exordium

✚ Will 2024 be the year that you die?

I don't mean breathe your last breath - but die - to self,

It might be the year I die physically and depart this world -The Lord knows.

But the death I am speaking of, and the Bible speaks much of it, is the death of my old self, my carnal selfish nature. For only then will I live a Holy life.

Will this be the year that that nature is put to death? It is important to have goals otherwise we can just trundle along. May that be our goal in 2024.

## Corinth

Paul in the opening remarks of his first letter to the church in Corinth shows his priorities for the church. What are those priorities? Look at the greeting in verses 1-3, and you will see something unusual. The only time 'sanctified' is used at the beginning of a letter is to the church at Corinth.

Only here does he refer to sanctification in his greeting. Paul's priorities in writing to the Corinthians was to stress the importance of holiness.

✚ Holiness is not something you hear much about these days, is it?

So why Holiness here? You need to look no further than the city in which the church had been birthed. What was it like?

Corinth was a city in a very strategic location making it excellent for trade. It grew into a large and rich city. It drew people from many places and races making it a very cosmopolitan city. This bustling busy city had an estimated 250,000 people plus about 400,000 slaves.

It was famous or notorious, for its immorality, for its sinfulness, for its loose living. Just outside the city, nearly 2,000 feet up stood a temple to the goddess Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of love. That temple was said to have 1000 women 'princesses' who were prostitutes. Sexual immorality was part the religious way of life. The words 'to Corinthianise' was used to mean to turn a place into one of immorality and loose living.

It's here in AD 50 that Paul came to preach the gospel. Here he stayed for 18 months, as long as he spent anywhere. He saw a church established, a large thriving church, a church that was blessed by God in many ways.

But it was also beset by many problems, not least, problems that grew out of the kind of situation they were living in. Christians there failed to live holy

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lives in the midst of that kind of culture. Socially they were under huge pressure to conform to the ungodliness of the city in which they found themselves. So what Paul said to the Corinthians is very relevant to us today in modern day Birmingham.

The church should be salt and light to the city – but the reverse took place - here the city brought immorality and darkness into the church. The result was a church riddled with problems, and arguably the neediest church in the NT.

Paul dealt patiently, carefully and thoroughly with their problems, problems of relationships, of morality, of litigation, of marriage, of worship, and of behaviour and doctrine. But before Paul got stuck into addressing those errors and disorders he made it clear from the start what he considered to be the priority for this church.

I sense the Lord saying that our motto text for 2024 here at KNBC should be v.2 **To the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus - and called to be holy.** So let's see Paul's priority - and make it our priority.

### *It is about the need for holiness*

The first thing to say is that the words '**sanctified** and **holy** have the same root word in the Greek. It is the word Hagios.

The word essentially means to be 'set apart', x2.

Firstly Paul says that the church there are **those sanctified**, that's in the past tense, they have been made holy, those who have been set apart.

✚ **This work of setting someone apart is the work of Christ on the cross.**

The cross is the fulfilment of the atonement foreshadowed by the sacrifices of the OT. It can be seen in two ways. The first way is best described by the word 'propitiation' meaning to appease or placate (such as an angry or insulted person or god). It's from the Latin root word propitius = 'gracious'.

Here God's anger is averted from one - onto another. That anger due to me because of my sin - is averted onto Christ. He takes it, he carries it.

- **Just as if someone came to stand in front of you - take a bullet to Himself - instead of you.**

**Here is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.** 1Jo 4:10, 1 John 2:2, Ro 3:25

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That is one way of looking at the cross and the most common way although not usually voiced in those words.

The second way, seen strongly in the OT, is 'redemption' x2.

'Redeemed' - The word used for ransom in the NT is Loutron. From Lou comes our English word loose: **A rope loosely tied around something.**

Tron being the action word 'to loosen' **Loosen a rope, untying a donkey.**

In the Greek OT the word Loutron is used in 99 places such as in Ex 30:12 **"When you take a census of the Israelites to count them, each one must pay the LORD a ransom for his life at the time he is counted. Then no plague will come on them when you number them."** (see also Lev 25:31,32, & Ex 21:8, Zp 3:1)

In the OT there are three words used each with a different shade of meaning.

1. One has a commercial aspect to it, as one might pay for goods or recompense for the damage of someone else's goods. (Pdh)
2. The second has a strong family sense, and has its meaning in family law. A kinsman is responsible for maintaining family honour and preserving the family's possessions. Sometimes referred to as the 'kinsman redeemer' (As Boaz) because it is done by one of the same family – just as Christ came as one of us, he is our kinsman, our brother in Adam. (g'l)
3. The last word (kopher) has the idea of the price or cost. The cost of the payment as a condition of release. The payment for 'loosing' so that something or someone held to ransom can be released on receipt of payment of that ransom. So Christ in giving up His perfect life paid the highest price as a release fee for me, someone in bondage. I am now 'loosed'. doctrine 18'.cdr

Do you see the bondage that your sin has produced in you? and need releasing from it's power?

Do you see the horror of your sin in it deserving of the Lord's anger? And know that the Lord will have to judge you for it on that Day to come?

Then turn from it, repent of it – and turn to a new master Jesus Christ whom the Almighty God has made Lord of all - Make Christ your Lord and you will know him as your Saviour, he who suffered in your place and paid the price to free you from being ensnared in sin's horrible trap.

Look to the Jesus, the Glorious Gracious Saviour while you can, give Him His rightful place as Lord and ruler of your life.

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Christ's suffering on the cross has freed the sinner of his guilt. Now being washed clean, I can, without hindrance, be brought to God, to know God.

✦ This justification is 100% the work of Christ. I play no part in this. It is given to me, applied to me by the Spirit of God.

Now I cleansed and right with God, - that work of reforming can begin.

Having been made Holy, I am called to – and I can - live out a holy life.

- Think of Catherine Middleton, or Megan Markle, or Fergie, or Captain Mark Philipps, these have all become Royals. Having been made Royal they were to now live like a Royal. How each one lived up to that calling – I will leave you to judge.

A Christian is someone who has been called from nowhere – to become a child of the King - and therefore you are now to live as a child of the King.

That means the old ways have to go, the old habits, the old company, the old interests that are contrary to your new life in Christ are to go.

*That is what I meant earlier when I spoke of the 'death of self'*

If you are united with Christ, then you not only live with Him - but you also died with Him. You can say with Paul “**I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me**”. Ga 2:20. It's ongoing.. **if by the Spirit you put to death AV mortify the flesh, the misdeeds of the body, you will live.**

Ro 8:13

At your baptism you publicly told the world that your old life was over, dead and buried and now it is all new in Christ, by him, to be lived for Him.

Paul says in Romans 6: if you live with him – we do so because we have died with Him. There is nothing left of me. Nothing to fight against His Spirit. Here are examples of someone still living with the flesh in control:

1. That person is easily offended = pride which is of me, means they are easily upset, easily rattled, prickly, snappy, that's a fleshly response.
2. So too is to put yourself in a good light and another in a worse light.
3. So too to walk away from a duty, to give up, is a response of the flesh.
4. So too is to always be speaking of self. Self. Time to kill off 'self'

These are not spiritual responses, they are 100% fleshly responses. These are responses a Christian should never make. Here is a man or woman

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immature in the faith, carnal not spiritual. Here is one of little use to the Lord in His service. We are to constantly put to death the flesh, mortify it.

- Field Marshall Montgomery of Alamein when he was invited to speak to the Army officers soon to pass out of Sandhurst – said that to command men, you first need to have command over yourself.

The Christians at Corinth sadly conformed to the ungodliness around them.

1. As Christians they were not to pursue their rights against a brother through the secular courts. Didn't Paul say: **why not rather be wronged?**
2. They were to curb their sexual passions to within marriage only.
3. They were not to show favouritism, they had to resist a party spirit, they had to kill off pride. It's in ch.13 that we see 'real love' so clearly.
4. The Christians had to realise that being free from the law didn't mean being free from restraint. They, as we, are under the Law of Christ – 'everything is permissible' they said – No - only if it's beneficial!

Christians - we are called to be Holy. As children of God we are to be like the father, the One who says “**be Holy as I am Holy**”

Holy separated living is not received as a gift - it is something you and I are to actively work at. Having been **sanctified**, we are **called to be holy**

We are not robots, there is no 'let go and let God', such a damaging teaching that has invaded the church years ago and still pervades.

Stanley Jebb speaking 30 years ago said: *The tendency in many circles today is to disregard God's Holy law. We've grown slack regarding separation and sanctification.*

Living a Holy life is active co-operation, a submission to the Spirit of Christ working within me. In other words, we have an active part to play.

Christians - we are to **fight to good fight of the faith**. Let us do battle with **the full armour of God** Eph 6:11 Something Paul implores us to “**Put on**” x2

**Christian – will you strive to obey Christ and conform your life to His life?**

That will mean an ongoing fight against the world's intrusion, against our sin, and against Satan and his schemes. How we need Christ' power in this.

The Godly 19<sup>th</sup> Century Bishop JC Ryle wrote a book called 'holiness'. Ryle states: '*practical holiness and the entire self-consecration to God, are not sufficiently attended to by modern Christians.*'

How about that for the understatement of the year?

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Never was there a greater need for an emphasis on holiness than today.

Only as we understand Who and What God is objectively, and theologically  
- can we understand what we are to be behaviorally and practically.

Why did Paul stress holiness? Because the Corinthians desperately needed it! The debauchery of the city of Corinth was everywhere - The church instead of standing out in sharp contrast to their surroundings were themselves known for their sin and carnality.

- C.H.Spurgeon once said that, "in proportion as a church is holy – so in that proportion will its testimony be powerful".

Spurgeon was right – isn't that why our testimony is not more powerful?

That is why Christ is at the centre of this opening chapter. It is striking that in the 31 verses of Ch.1 Christ is spoken of in no less than 17 of them.

Receive a letter from someone, and if in every other sentence they spoke warmly of a person, you would know that they love that person!

So as you read this chapter and on in ch. 2, you cannot fail to realise that Paul's message was a Christ centred message. He says: "For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you - except Jesus Christ and him crucified." 1Co 2:2. Whatever path he is pursuing, whatever problems he is undoing, whatever priorities he is laying down, he always points to Christ.

✚ There is no holiness without Christ, there is no holiness without the holy One, - no person is holy in and of himself, - except in Christ.

You and I are called to a Holy life – and that can only be so when my life is filled with Christ, and His character. I must die, for I am the problem.

I must die and He must live, that comes by the 'Means of Grace' - expand

- Daniel Wilson, Bishop of Calcutta said in his Journal, of 24<sup>th</sup> July, 1846: "I have been reading a volume of James Hervey's Letters, he is full of that thorough devotedness of heart, deadness to all earthly things, and longings after grace and holiness, which characterized the leaders of the revival in our church. Oh! That the spirit of Hervey might pervade our younger clergy and myself. To walk with God is the only spring of happiness and usefulness."

Paul calls the Christians in Corinth the Church of God. the Church, *Ecclesia* is the NT word used because it first referred to the Assembly, God's

redeemed people in the wilderness, a people 'called out' from their bondage in Egypt.

✚ The church, God's Holy people, is God's holy dwelling.

The temple of the Lord. One way we can see this is to consider the temple in Jerusalem. It was made of huge rectangular stones that fitted perfectly together. That is to show how we should be, and will be one day be in Glory These stones were chiselled into shape some distance away in a valley by 80,000 of Solomon's stonecutters. Wow that would have been a noisy place.

✚ So our churches today are noisy places as we are chiselled into shape.

How did they make them all the right size? They had a template which would have been used by all. The cornerstone. Jesus Christ the cornerstone.

Jonathan was asked a few weeks ago to come to the front and draw a house. he did very well but did change his mind a bit along the way

The point is that the Lord when he made his church always had in mind what he wanted, what this house would be like, he never hesitated, or changed his mind, or had second thoughts. From before time began he knew how it should be, - and will one day be.

Let us all, every Christian look ahead to how it will one day be.

Ever made a suit?, or a dress? Part the way through you reach the point where there are just a collection of odd shaped bits of cloth, but seamstress does not give up because she has the pattern, she looks at the picture on the packet, see can how it will end up when completed.

So with the church – see how complete and glorious it will one day be! - But let us look not to heavenly glory - but to the Glorious One of heaven!

*The bride eyes not her garment, but her dear Bridegroom's face;  
I will not gaze at glory but on my King of Grace,  
Not at the crown he gives me but on his pierc-ed hand.  
Glory, glory, in Immanuel's land.  
Oh, the Lamb is all the glory, in Immanuel's land.*

(So reads a poem drawn from the letters of Samuel Rutherford)

Aim for Holiness in 24, make it your personal desire, your personal goal, plan your actions towards it. Make the Motto text for 2024 our motto text - **To the church of God in Kings Norton, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus - and called to be holy**, 1 Cor 1:2

END