

Patchogue Church of the Nazarene
Sunday March 12, 2006 – 9 & 11 AM

**“A Quest for Life – A Quest for God”
Sanctification - Matt. 5:48**

[Click here for the handout notes that were in the bulletin.](#)

This is the second Sunday of Lent. Pastor Jerry mention last week that Lent is a time to reflect, a time to prepare, and a time to evaluate our spiritual life and walk with God. It is also common to fast during Lent as a way of denying ourselves something in order to focus on God, prayer, and our personal spiritual journey. Lent does not include Sundays, however, because Jesus has already risen, so we celebrate together and break the fasts on Sunday. Starting tomorrow we will hold a corporate fast for the next week, like as did last week. If you locate the insert in your bulletin, you will notice this week we will ...

Fast - (Deny Yourself) - "Unnecessary, unwise, impulse spending."

Uh Oh – Can't we just give up ice cream for a week? ☺ I was OK with the media fast. I'm just glad it's not golf season yet – phew!

Last week Pastor Jerry began a Lenten series called “A Quest for Life – A Quest for God.” He started off this series by showing us that this quest begins with a relationship with Jesus Christ as a necessary criterion. So our quest for life, true life begins with salvation in Jesus Christ and the initial infilling of the Holy Spirit. Today I would like us to continue to consider this quest for life as we look together at the process of sanctification. I will use just this one verse as a starting point even though it will seem like a tall order initially. Jesus tells us what our goal must be to be sanctified...

Matt. 5:48 - “Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”

Sanctify – according to Webster's Dictionary – **1.** To set apart for sacred use: CONSECRATE **2.** To make free from sin: PURIFY **3.** To give religious sanction to, as with an oath. **4.** To give moral sanction to. **5.** To make productive of holiness or blessing.

Holy is a term that can only refer to the divine. Only God is Holy. Anyone or anything else that is considered holy is holy in relation to God. God's people can and should be holy. Since God is the Holy, He seeks a people who will represent Him in holiness. Holiness is the very Godness of God. It is who God is! Humans cannot really fathom or comprehend holiness. It makes us fall down in realization of how far we are from Him in every way. To be sanctified means to be holy.

Is. 6:1 – Isaiah said, **“I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up.”** This was radical for the Hebrew people to grasp – no one can see God and live. Isaiah heard seraphim saying, **“Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord Almighty. The whole earth is full of His glory.” Is. 6:3.** Look at the effect it had on Isaiah in verse five, **“Woe to me!” I cried. “I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eye have seen the King, the Lord Almighty!” (Is. 6:5).**

Throughout Scripture people are humbled by the actual presence of God in their midst.

Ex. 20:18-21 – Moses at Mount Sinai; **Job 42:1-6** – Job and God speaking to him from the whirlwind; **Mt. 17:1-8** – the disciples on the Mount of Transfiguration.

In the Old Testament, Moses gave the people the Torah, instructions for holy living. This included but was not limited to: love God above everything else, love your neighbor as yourself, deal with people fairly, don't cheat each other, don't envy or desire what doesn't belong to you, if you break something or hurt someone make restitution, if someone accidentally does something forgive them, apply God's holiness to your daily living and so represent God's holiness on this earth. It boiled down to this statement, or command, ***"Be holy for I the Lord am Holy."*** (repeated over and over).

In the New Testament we have another who similar to Moses gave instructions to His disciples and the people about holy living. Jesus' Sermon on the Mount is the New Testament version of the Holiness Code we read in the Torah. He refines the instructions a bit and makes some things stricter, but still the sermon is a dissertation on holy living. Jesus gives all the guidelines and commands regarding relationships. Sanctification is the process of living a holy life, a life separated for God and His purposes. In Matt. 5:48, Jesus boils down His holiness teaching as Moses did with one line. ***"Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect."*** Sound familiar? It did to those in Jesus audience too. They knew the Law of Moses and the Holiness Code of the Torah. This was an immediate flashback for them to the guidelines for holy living they grew up learning, or should have.

There are two aspects to holiness or sanctification, ceremonial and ethical.

Ceremonial holiness – (a priestly ritual) – is showing the distinction between God and His creation, whereby objects and people become holy as they are set apart or separated from a secular purpose to as sacred one. It is participating in the rituals and traditions of religion recognizing that these things are separated as holy to the Lord and so, in a sense, we are holy by participating. The Old Testament was particularly conscious of the rituals and ceremonies.

Ex 40:9-13 – ***"Take the anointing oil and anoint the tabernacle and everything in it; consecrate it and all its furnishings, and it will be holy. 10 Then anoint the altar of burnt offering and all its utensils; consecrate the altar, and it will be most holy. 11 Anoint the basin and its stand and consecrate them. 12 "Bring Aaron and his sons to the entrance to the Tent of Meeting and wash them with water. 13 Then dress Aaron in the sacred garments, anoint him and consecrate him so he may serve me as priest."***

This ritual of anointing of consecration sanctified everything ceremonially as holy. This is what was commanded. This is what was believed. This is what took place. As long as the ceremony took place, the holiness took place and should be treated as such. Last week we celebrated Holy Communion together. This is a ceremony we are all familiar with. A prayer of consecration is said over the elements of bread and juice. Ceremonially, these no longer are common bread and juice, but instruments of God's grace. They have been set apart to God – holy – as long as we consider them as such. God intended this exact same principle to be in place for His people through ceremonial sanctification in the Old Testament. God's people were to be consecrated to Him, set apart from others around them, different, sanctified.

Ex 39:30 - ***Finally, they made the sacred medallion of pure gold to be worn on the front of the turban. Using the techniques of an engraver, they inscribed it with these words: SET APART AS HOLY TO THE LORD.*** (NLT)

This emblem for the priest's turban was a sign that the priest was ceremonially set apart for God and His purposes.

Ethical holiness – (prophet) – is intended to mirror God's own holy love and concern for all people. It is living our day to day lives in such a way that we apply the guidelines of holiness to every thing

we do in our relationships with others, all the time, not just on Sunday. Jesus exemplified ethical holiness – having a more profound concern for justice, love, and mercy than for ritual practices. ***“The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath.” (Mk. 2:27).***

Jesus demonstrated this very point in the several miracles He worked on the Sabbath. He chose to heal people of non life-threatening diseases on the Sabbath when these acts could have easily waited for Sunday, Monday, or Tuesday without any negative impact. He chose to do these miracles on the Sabbath to show that ceremonial sanctification is not the only thing that God honors. Ethical sanctification is more important. Jesus showed the priority of caring for others over ritual practices.

For example, attending church services and taking Holy Communion are ceremonially holy since we are setting ourselves apart for God. Living Monday through Saturday in a way that is pleasing to the Lord by helping the helpless, feeding the hungry, caring for the sick and the widowed is ethical holy living. Jesus ministered to those who were outcasts. He loved those who hated Him. He healed those who no one would even look at. He let the insults and false accusations roll off His back, and He spoke the truth in love. He didn’t slander, gossip, or hold a grudge against anyone, and he ultimately laid down His life for others who didn’t deserve it.

Jesus demonstrated ethical sanctification, but He is not completely on one side of the equation. Balance is a key ingredient in Jesus’ ministry and teaching. The Gospel teaches us that Christians (believers) are to consecrate themselves as living sacrifices to God (ceremonially). This consecration immediately leads to ethical considerations too. Our responsibility is to consecrate ourselves, set ourselves apart, or sanctify ourselves to God in our daily actions and attitudes too.

2 Cor 6:16-7:1 – *What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: “I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people.” 17 “Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you.” 18 “I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.”*
7:1 *Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.*

The sanctified life is all about relationships. It is a life set apart for God. We are God’s representatives. Are we representing who God really is to those around us? Are we showing others love and the holiness of God? Jesus instructs about relationships with people and commands us, ***“Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”*** The echo of Moses’ words fill our mind and the minds of the Jews who listened to Jesus speak – “Be holy for I the Lord am holy.”

God’s Plan For Us:

In order to talk about sanctification, we must address reconciliation. Sin is not a thing or entity or substance that can be uprooted and removed by God. Sin is lovelessness – toward God and others. It is what is ingrained in us because of the Fall, and it has become our natural tendency. It is self-centeredness rather than God and other centeredness. God’s grace is available and working in such a way to save us. When we respond to this enabling of our faith to God’s grace given freely through Jesus Christ, we are brought into relationship with God, which is reconciliation. As we learned last week this is the beginning of true quest for life and quest for God. We are sanctified in that instant, set apart for God. We belong to him and adopted by Him. We are brought into a new relationship with God (**justified**) that we could not have thought possible and is possible only in Christ Jesus our Lord. We are given the Holy Spirit (**regenerated**), and He (the Holy Spirit) bears witness with our spirits that “we are the children of God” (**adopted**).

In regeneration (the giving of the Holy Spirit upon accepting Jesus) the sanctification process has begun (initial sanctification). When we recognize the implications of having been set apart by God, there comes a second level or time of decision in our walk with God. It is at this point that we must actively and willingly and lovingly entrust our redeemed selves to God completely. The Nazarene church and Wesleyan Theology call this “Entire Sanctification.” It is a second decision to yield to the Lordship of Christ in our life. It takes some time for this reality and desire to set in, and everyone is unique in this timing. This second work of grace in a believer’s life is based upon our response to God’s love. It is a response of total consecration, of offering our deepest selves as a living sacrifice to God and His will.

If sin is lovelessness, then Christian perfection is when love is the only element in one’s life. John Wesley said it this way in his Plain Account of Christian Perfection, ***“Scripture perfection is, pure love filling the heart, and governing all the words and actions... But if the love of God fill all the heart, there can be no sin therein ... [It is] love filling the heart, expelling pride, anger, desire, self-will; rejoicing evermore, praying without ceasing, and in everything giving thanks.”*** (Wesley, Plain Account, 60, 45, 84).

When we, by God’s grace, live in this relationship of love for God and others, we are perfect. We are being what we are created to be. We are – perfect in intension, perfect indirection, since our aim is toward becoming more Christ-like. This is the sanctified life! This is a life set apart for loving God and others. The closer we get to this life of complete sanctification or perfection, the less impact sin can have in our life and actions. Wesley believed that, since this is a work of Almighty God, that one can achieve this perfection in this life (although very rare, and most will only realize this perfection in eternity). However, it must be the goal and desire of all Christians now! God equips us and enables us, by His grace and the indwelling Holy Spirit, to live in this sanctified relationship with God and others. God ***“gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”*** (1 Cor. 15:57).

All this talk about sanctification involves the part of us that is at the center of who we are. The Bible refers to this as the “heart” – our deepest self. OK – here’s a news flash for you all, and I quote, ... ***“The self never is destroyed, nor is it ‘cleansed’ in such a way that some thing or blot is removed, never to return. The words love and sin, as here used, describe the basic qualities of relationship to God and neighbor in which we may live.”*** (Lodahl, The Story of God, p. 197).

Even though we are “filled with the Holy Spirit,” self is always a part of the equation. God desires a covenantal partnership with us – between Holy Spirit and our self or heart. PJ mentioned the Fruit of the Spirit last week. As believers this fruit begins to grow and ripen in our lives. One fruit listed in **Gal. 5:23** by Paul, is ***“self-control.”*** There is a responsibility on our part, but it is assisted by the Holy Spirit in this partnership. Timothy is told that, ***“God did not give us a spirit of fear, but of power, and love, and self-discipline.”*** (2 Tim. 1:7). God is in the process of creating you and me into the unique selves that we are to become. What are we to become? **PERFECT!** That is God’s intent for each one of us and Jesus’ command. We are to be perfected in love, God’s love, so that it affects our day to day lives and every motivation of every thought, word, and deed. Are you there yet? I know I’m not, but I want to be, and that’s the key. It’s not so much that I have arrived because I haven’t, but that my goal remains to be perfect by the power of the Holy Spirit in my life and to know that this is the will of God for each of us. (1 Tim. 4:3) – ***“It is the will of God that you be sanctified,”*** made holy, consecrated to God, set apart to God and His purposes, perfected in His love, empowered by His Spirit to discipline self and control self, to love God above anything else, to love others with His perfect love that effects our actions toward people, to not be judgmental, to be honest in business and financial affairs, to not be idolatrous or desirous of everything out there, to

not envy or covet, to bless and not curse, to prefer others before ourselves, to be holy, to be sanctified, and to be God's prized possessions, the very people of God. That is His will for us.

Lev 11:44-45 – O.T. –

I am the LORD your God; consecrate yourselves and be holy, because I am holy. Do not make yourselves unclean by any creature that moves about on the ground. I am the LORD who brought you up out of Egypt to be your God; therefore be holy, because I am holy.

Matt. 5:48 – N.T. – “So be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”

How Can We Be Sanctified?

It is the Holy Spirit's part to begin the transforming work of divine love in our character and choices. Sanctification is the overall work of God in us.

1 Thess 5:23-24 - *May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it.*

It is also through reading and studying the Bible that we understand these things and can decide to apply the Truth to our lives and be sanctified. Jesus prayed for this for us all.

Sanctification is the work of Jesus in our lives.

John 17:17-19 – *Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. 18 As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. 19 For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.*

Sanctification is also the work of the Holy Spirit who dwells in us if we have received Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord.

1 Cor 6:11 – *And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.*

It is the process whereby we are being made increasingly in the likeness of Jesus (Col. 3:10).

However, God respects our will so much that He will not re-create us without our willing participation. We are being re-created by the Holy Spirit to be increasingly like Jesus, a lover of God and people. This is made available to us by God through the Holy Spirit, but it is our choice to participate, and our responsibility to purposely work toward the goal.

Col 3:5-10 – *Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. 6 Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. 7 You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. 8 But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. 9 Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices 10 and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.*

We could not control all these fleshly iniquities in our own power. God knows that. He gave the Holy Spirit to work along with us provide the motivation and the power to live a holy life. Do you desire to walk closer to the Lord? Are you feeling that the Holy Spirit is prompting you to “kick it up a notch” in your Christian walk? We are on a Quest for Life that is a quest for God and begins by recognizing our need for a savior, Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit comes to dwell within us and He begins a purification process that sets us apart from the world and sanctifies us to God. When we realize and really grasp that this is happening in our spiritual lives, it moves us toward consecrating ourselves completely to God. Is this your desire? Be sanctified, holy, set apart for God.

Matt. 5:48 - “*Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.*”