

## The Hush of Holiness

Psalm 99:1-9

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When I was a student at Moody Bible Institute, I served as a summer missionary in Zimbabwe where I taught in a Bible college. At the end of our time, our team took a trip to Victoria Falls, which is one of the largest and most famous waterfalls in the world. Incredibly, it is a mile wide and twice as deep as Nigara Falls. When I got off the bus, I heard a loud, thunderous noise that seemed to be coming from the sky and the earth at the same time. As I walked closer to the Falls, I could barely think because I was astonished, amazed, and undone. As heavy mist clouded my view, my heart started racing, my head was pounding, and my ears were ringing. It was deafening and breathtaking. I couldn't have talked if I had wanted to because I was in the presence of sheer power and stunning beauty.

When missionary David Livingstone first saw Victoria Falls in 1855, he was astounded and overwhelmed as well. He later described it in his journal: *"No one can imagine the beauty of the view from anything witnessed in England. Scenes so lovely must have been gazed upon by angels in their flight."* Struggling to capture the magnitude of it, the sense of majesty left him speechless.

Last week, we focused on the tenderness of God in Psalm 56 as we saw how He calms our fears and captures our tears all through the years. We're called to trust and obey, for there's no other way. Today, we'll be challenged to tremble before the Almighty, to be hushed by His holiness, and to surrender to His reign and rule in our lives.

Please close your eyes and listen to Psalm 99: ***"The Lord reigns; let the peoples tremble! He sits enthroned upon the cherubim; let the earth quake! The Lord is great in Zion; He is exalted over all the peoples. Let them praise your great and awesome name! Holy is He! The King in His might loves justice. You have established equity; you have executed justice and righteousness in Jacob. Exalt the Lord our God; worship at His footstool! Holy is He! Moses and Aaron were among His priests, Samuel also among those who called upon His name. They called to the Lord, He answered them. In the pillar of the cloud He spoke to them; they kept His testimonies and the statute that He gave them. O Lord our God, you answered them; you were a forgiving God to them, but an avenger of their wrongdoings. Exalt the Lord our God, and worship at His holy mountain; for the Lord our God is holy."***

Here are a couple observations which will help us interpret and apply this astonishing Psalm.

- **This is considered one of the enthronement Psalms.** Beginning in Psalm 93, and continuing through Psalm 99, we're reminded of God's rule and reign:

Psalm 93:1: *"The Lord reigns; He is robed in majesty..."*

Psalm 96:10: *"Say among the nations, 'The Lord reigns...'"*

Psalm 97:1: *"The Lord reigns, let the earth rejoice..."*

Psalm 99:1: *"The Lord reigns; let the peoples tremble..."*

- **The theme is the holiness of God.** The Hebrew language uses repetition to express superlatives or to indicate totality. An example is found in Isaiah 6:3: *"Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory!"* In Revelation 4:8, the four living creatures around the throne exclaim, *"Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!"* This could be translated as, *"God is holy, holier, and holiest!"* The Bible calls God holy more than anything else.

God's holiness is the sum of all His attributes. One commentator says, *"The basic idea is separation. It emphasizes the great distance between God and humankind – not only morally, as in the difference between pure and polluted, but also in the realm of being."* God is infinitely unique and transcendentally distinct from His creation as we see in Exodus 15:11: *"Who is like you, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in glorious deeds, doing wonders?"*

One pastor observed: *"There is probably no attribute of God which needs to be taught and recognized in our day than His holiness."* David Wells writes: *"We have turned to a God we can use rather than to a God we must obey; we have turned to a God who will fulfill all our needs rather than to a God before whom we must surrender our rights to ourselves...and so we transform the God of mercy into a God who is at our mercy."*

At the heart of our rebellion against God is to somehow make Him just "one more thing" in our lives, so we bring Him down to our level, where He loses His distinctiveness. The Bible calls this idolatry.

In Psalm 99, the theme of God's holiness is repeated three times at the end of verses 3, 5, and 9:

Psalm 99:3: ***"Holy is He!"***

Psalm 99:5: ***"Holy is He!"***

Psalm 99:9: ***"For the Lord our God is holy!"***

These natural divisions will form our preaching outline because everything God is and does is holy.

1. **God is exalted in His holy reign (1-3).**
2. **God is enthroned in His holy righteousness (4-5).**
3. **God is encountered in His holy relationships (6-9).**

Here's our main idea: *Because God reigns over all, I must allow Him to rule over all of me.*

**1. God is exalted in His holy reign.** Verse 1 says, ***"The Lord reigns; let the peoples tremble! He sits enthroned upon the cherubim; let the earth quake!"*** The word ***"reigns"*** means, *"to have sway, power, and dominion over people and nations."* This reads like a declaration designed to get our attention: *"Listen up! God reigns."*

Because God is all-powerful, all peoples everywhere are to ***"tremble,"*** or ***"shake"*** before Him. One of the most vivid examples of people trembling before Jesus is found in John 18:6 when the soldiers came to arrest Jesus: ***"When Jesus said to them, 'I am He,' they drew back and fell to the ground."*** In the presence of glory, the well-armed enemies of Christ trembled and hit the dirt! Those who came to arrest Him were themselves arrested. When Christ came forward, they fell backward.

This week, I learned that the Religious Society of Friends, commonly known as the Quakers, got their name from a combination of a derogatory term and their own embrace of the name. Initially, "Quaker" was used as a taunt, mocking the physical manifestations of religious fervor, which included trembling. One time, George Fox, one of the founders, was facing a judge in a courtroom, when he told the judge *"To tremble at the word of the Lord."* The judge responded tersely, *"You are the quaker!"* This name stuck because they were known for quaking and shaking when they came under conviction from the Holy Spirit. I think we could stand for some more quaking and shaking, don't you?

Charles Spurgeon had some good insight: *“Men of the world ridiculed ‘the Quakers’ for trembling when under the power of the Holy Spirit; had they been able to discern the majesty of the Eternal they would have quaked also.”* This reminds me of something the theologian David Wells has said: *“The modern church wants therapy not redemption, to be happy not holy, to feel good not be good, and to avoid pain not sin.”* Let’s never forget that God is exalted in His holy reign.

In contrast to the six-winged seraphim who praise God as they fly around God’s throne in Isaiah 6, the cherubim are four-winged angels who guard God’s holiness. Fashioned out of hammered gold, they are depicted on either side of the ark of the covenant, where both majesty and mercy are displayed. This was a special meeting place according to Exodus 25:22: *“There I will meet with you, and from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim that are on the ark of the testimony...”* Before the holiness of God, the earth quakes, or is knocked off balance as stated in Isaiah 24:9: *“The earth is utterly broken, the earth is split apart, the earth is violently shaken.”*

Bryan LaBerge points out how the cherubim were stationed at the Tree of Life (Genesis 3:24), the Mercy Seat (Exodus 25:22), and in the empty tomb (John 20:12). In addition, the earth quaked, rocks split open, and the temple curtain was torn when Jesus died on the cross. Another earthquake occurred when the angel rolled back the stone to reveal an empty tomb.

In Psalm 99:2-3, we see that God has a heart for Jerusalem and for the nations, *“The Lord is great in Zion; He is exalted over all the peoples. Let them praise your great and awesome name! Holy is He!”* The mandate for missions is not just found in the New Testament. Psalm 96:3 says, *“Declare His glory among the nations, His marvelous works among all the peoples.”*

I’m looking forward to Go Con September 27-28. This equipping and mobilizing event will focus on God’s heart for the nations and explore our role in going with the gospel to our neighbors and the nations or to be senders who support missionaries spiritually, emotionally, and financially. As part of our six-week “Here Am I” sermon series in September and October, Go Con will give us a unique opportunity to dive deeper into God’s global calling for our lives.

Dr. Todd Ahrend will be our keynote speaker. He is the Director of The Traveling Team; a national mobilization movement focused on engaging believers in the task

of world evangelization. Todd has spoken to thousands across the country and has ministered in over 60 nations, including extended time living in the Middle East.

Go Con will also feature many of Edgewood's Global Go Team partners, like Kishor Pandagade, who ministers around the world. I interviewed Kishor on this week's 4G podcast. I encourage you to check it out for some incredible stories.

We'll also have representatives from Voice of the Martyrs and Samaritan's Purse here and all of our local Go Team partners. You'll hear inspiring stories, explore practical ways to get involved, and connect with others who are passionate about the Great Commission through several breakout sessions.

I'm also praying that we'll be able to commission Edgewood members Aaron and Amanda Langworthy and their family to minister to the unreached in Uganda. We've been praying that God would raise up more workers to go into the harvest, and He has done so with the Langworthy's. They spoke with a church in Georgia this past weekend and this weekend they are on the west coast raising support.

They are now at 84% of the support they need. I'd like to give a challenge to those of us who are individual Edgewood members. Since they only need \$1300 more a month, would you consider partnering with them? They are already receiving generous support from our EdgeMissions budget but are in need of additional individual partners. Beth and I have joined their support team. Would you consider partnering with them so they can leave for Uganda in October? There's information about how to do that at the EdgeMissions display in the north lobby.

### **Pray for Langworthy Family**

I also wanted to pass along that Edgewood member Shalom Warrington will be taking an extended break from pursuing long-term missions. Right now, she will be serving as a volunteer in the church, working in a local school interpreting for the deaf, and praying about further education opportunities.

*Because God reigns over all, I must allow Him to rule over all of me.*

**2. God is enthroned in His holy righteousness.** As part of God's rule and reign, we can count on His equity and justice. We see this in verse 4: ***“The King in His might loves justice. You have established equity; you have executed justice and righteousness in Jacob.”*** Notice that God ***“loves”*** justice and He has ***“established***

*equity,*” meaning He is always fair and impartial. His final ruling is always right because He is righteous.

While we don’t always see justice in our world today, we know that God is enthroned with holy righteousness. The desire we have for justice to be done and for wrongs to be made right is not a human invention, but rather reflects the character of God Himself. Our longing for justice comes because we are made in the image of a God who is just.

This desire for justice is deep in our community as we’ve been longing for things to be made right on behalf of Trudy Appleby, who has been missing for 29 years. A little over a week ago, a man was indicted on three counts of first-degree murder and one count of concealment of homicidal death. One headline captured the feelings of the entire Quad Cities community: *“Finally. After nearly 30 years, justice moves forward.”*

Special thanks to the Moline Police Department, local media who kept the story alive, the Quad Cities Missing Person Network, and the entire community for their diligent work over the years.

I appreciated what the Moline Police Department posted on Thursday: *“Last week wasn't the ending, it was just the beginning. We will never stop looking for you. To our community, thank you for never giving up. To those responsible for the crime or the coverup, you thought you got away with it, you now know you were wrong. We will hunt each and every one of you down until we get the answers her family deserves, the answers our community deserves and you will be held responsible.”*

I attended the vigil for Trudy on Thursday night and was struck by how many times the word justice was used. One family member ended his comments by saying, “Justice for Trudy.” A police officer wrapped up his speech in a similar way: “Justice will always prevail.”

The drive for justice is also why we must prize and protect the preborn. Proverbs 31:8-9 says, ***“Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy.”*** The annual Walk for Life is coming up on Saturday, September 6 at Ben Butterworth Parkway. If you can’t come but would like to support Pregnancy Resources, our very own Cory McAnally is collecting funds again. He’s already at \$2,000. His goal this year is \$5,000.

This leads to a question. How do we process so much injustice in our world today? It helps to remember that because God is enthroned in His holy righteousness, His ultimate justice will prevail as Isaiah 42:4 declares: ***“He will not grow faint or be discouraged till He has established justice in the earth.”*** Genesis 18:25 says, ***“Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?”***

In the meantime, Micah 6:8 gives us our marching orders: ***“He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God.”*** Incidentally, our newest men’s group on Thursday night takes their name from this verse as they call themselves M68. We actually have five men’s groups now.

- Men of Integrity (Thursdays at 9:00 a.m.)
- Unashamed (Thursday at 6:00 p.m.)
- M68 (Thursday at 6:30 p.m.)
- BetterMan (Saturday at 7:00 a.m.)
- EdgeMen (Sunday at 9:00 a.m.)

This fall, Sheila Kuriscak and her team are planning several women’s groups including an evening study, a Wednesday morning study, Bible Weavers on the 2nd Saturday of the month, and two groups on Sunday mornings. More details to come.

According to verse 5, the only appropriate response to God being enthroned in righteousness is to, ***“Exalt the Lord our God; worship at His footstool! Holy is He!”*** Because God has established equity and will ultimately execute justice, we are called to exalt Him by lifting Him up, while we go low before Him. To ***“exalt”*** means to lift up, above everything else.

The root of the Hebrew word for ***“worship”*** is to *“fall down, to crouch, to prostrate oneself.”* The ***“footstool”*** can refer to Jerusalem (Lamentations 2:1), the Ark of the Covenant (1 Chronicles 28:2), enemies (Psalm 110:1), or the entire earth (Isaiah 66:1). The idea is we’re to surrender and submit to Him because He is holy, holy, holy. Have you done so? Psalm 132:7: ***“Let us go to His dwelling place; let us worship at His footstool.”***

*Because God reigns over all, I must allow Him to rule over all of me.*

**3. God is encountered in His holy relationships.** It's incredible that in His transcendent holiness, God would condescend and enter into relationship with unholy people. We're given some examples in verses 6-7: ***“Moses and Aaron were among His priests, Samuel also among those who called upon His name. They called to the Lord, He answered them. In the pillar of the cloud He spoke to them; they kept His testimonies and the statute that He gave them.”***

While Moses and Samuel were not technically priests, all three of them performed priestly functions. We could say it like this. God appointed Moses and Samuel to be prophets to represent Him to the people, and men like Aaron to be priests to represent the people before God.

In verse 8, we see God is a personal God who forgives but also enforces consequences: ***“O Lord our God, you answered them; you were a forgiving God to them, but an avenger of their wrongdoings.”*** When we encounter holiness, we come face to face with our sin.

True worship acknowledges both God's mercy and His majesty. I think of a couple examples of how God cleansed sin and yet consequences still followed.

- Moses and Aaron were forgiven but in Numbers 20:12, we read: ***“And the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, ‘Because you did not believe in me, to uphold me as holy in the eyes of the people of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land that I have given them.’”***
- While David was forgiven for his sin with Bathsheba and murder of Uriah, the child conceived in adultery died, the sword did not depart from David's house, evil arose within his own family, and David's wives were given to his son Absalom.

Having said that, God also answers prayer. We see this in verse 6: ***“...They called to the Lord, and He answered them”*** and in verse 8: ***“O Lord our God, you answered them...”***

God loves it when His people petition Him in prayer. Some incredible things happened at the Prayer for QC Schools this past Sunday night as 250 people came out on a hot night to pray for 34 schools. While some only had a few people, 20 prayed for Rockridge, 34 gathered to pray for Riverdale Schools, and 40 met to pray for UT.

The Delp family from Edgewood split up to pray at two different locations. Since Joel teaches at Moline High School, he joined the believers there. Sarah took their three children to Butterworth Elementary School.

Sarah recounted what God did in answering Rylynn and Remi's prayers (I have their permission to share this). Remi sat on the slide and prayed, while Rylynn went to a swing and prayed.

Each of the kids prayed, *"Dear Jesus, I pray for the kid that sits in this swing/goes down this slide. I pray that if they don't know about you that they will, so that they can go to heaven."*

A few minutes later a car pulled up. We wondered if it might be someone for prayer night. Instead, it was a family with two little boys. The first thing the boys did was run straight to the slide that Remi had just prayed at. Immediately after that, they ran directly over to the swing that Rylynn had just prayed at. Remi went over and asked them if they were there for prayer night. They said no, and he told them about how we were praying for the school.

They stayed a little while longer (because it was so hot!), PLAYED ON NO OTHER EQUIPMENT, and went home.

I called Rylynn and Remi over and explained to them what I had just noticed. They were both in shock that those could have been the kids we had JUST prayed for. We all agreed that there was no way it was a coincidence, but instead our God who brought them there so WE could pray for them.

We got to pray for the salvation of those two little boys and their parents, and I get to thank God for witnessing the sparkle in my kiddos eyes as they saw Jesus working and moving right before them.

I often sit and think about how I can get my kids excited about God or reading His word so they can experience Him like we do...and this just showed me how simple it really is. All we did was take some time out of the evening to go down and pray together. And look at how He chose to move.

Rylynn especially has been excited and reminded how God hears and answers her no matter where she is. Even if she's just sitting on a

park swing. He's just so good. And I love being reminded how much He truly loves our little ones.

Sarah texted a bit later to give the rest of the story. Parents, you'll be able to relate.

I am accustomed to hearing about the "big" things that are happening at FCA or how many people turned out for an event while I am at home with the kids. And those things should be praised. But if I'm honest, my night with the kids was not as pretty as in the pictures. It was a million degrees, Wes was running around crazy, we could hear the ice cream truck in the distance, and I was doing everything I could just to keep their attention.

I had definitely written the night off and thought at least we instilled in our kids the importance of praying for our school or taking part in a corporate prayer night...while Joel was "actually praying" with others at the high school. Never in my wildest dreams did I think He would show up that night. [I hope this] story encourages the mom like me who often feels like the things I'm doing don't matter.

I love how this Psalm ends in verse 9: ***“Exalt the Lord our God, and worship at His holy mountain; for the Lord our God is holy.”***

After listening to a long and drawn-out sermon, a boy walked out of the service with a big frown on his face. He had a rough morning because his dad had corrected him several times to keep him from fidgeting. Seeing his long face, one of the members came up and asked, *“What’s the matter, Johnny? You look so sad.”* The frustrated boy responded quickly, *“I am sad. It’s hard to be happy and holy at the same time.”*

Johnny speaks for many of us, doesn't he? It's hard to be holy and happy. Some of us think that to be holy means that one will never be happy. Others think that they have to be unholy to be happy.

Actually, the way to happiness is through holiness.

Check out this quote from D.A. Carson:

“People do not drift toward Holiness. Apart from grace-driven effort, people do not gravitate toward godliness, prayer, obedience to

Scripture, faith, and delight in the Lord. We drift toward compromise and call it tolerance; we drift toward disobedience and call it freedom; we drift toward superstition and call it faith. We cherish the indiscipline of lost self-control and call it relaxation; we slouch toward prayerlessness and delude ourselves into thinking we have escaped legalism; we slide toward godlessness and convince ourselves we have been liberated.”

### **Action Steps**

**1. Aim at growing in your understanding of God’s holiness.** Read the opening chapters of Ezekiel and tremble before Him. Read Isaiah 6 to shake and quake like Isaiah did. Be like Moses and dare to ask God to show you His glory (Exodus 33:18). Read *The Holiness of God* by R.C. Sproul or *The Pursuit of Holiness* by Jerry Bridges.

**2. Regularly thank God for His forgiveness and mercy.** Make sure to confess when you sin and keep a close relationship with God.

**3. Grow in personal holiness.** C.S. Lewis said, *“How little people know who think that holiness is dull. When one meets the real thing...it is irresistible. If even ten percent of the world’s population had it, would not the whole world be converted and happy before a year’s end?”*

Let’s flesh out what personal holiness might look like.

- Be holy in your social media
- Be holy in your gaming
- Be holy in what you stream
- Be holy on the web
- Be holy on your phone
- Be holy in your dating relationships
- Be holy in your marriage
- Be holy where you hang out
- Be holy in the kind of music you listen to
- Be holy in your sports
- Be holy at home
- Be holy in your neighborhood
- Be holy at work
- Be holy in your thoughts

- Be holy in everything you do

**4. Spend time exalting God at His footstool.** Another good “holiness habit” is to read your Bible every day and make sure you’re gathering with God’s people in worship every weekend.

### **Gospel Invitation**

*Because God reigns over all, I must allow Him to rule over all of me. Is He ruling over everything in your life right now?*

In the greatest act of condescension, God the Father sent His Son to die in our place and be raised on the third day. When we bow in submission to Him, we can say with the psalmist that He is the Lord *our* God.

*“Lord Jesus, for too long I’ve kept You out of my life. I admit that I am a sinner and that I cannot save myself. I repent of my sins by changing my mind about the way I’ve been living. Please forgive me, a sinner. Thank You, Lord Jesus, for coming to earth. With all my heart I believe You are the Son of God who died on the cross for my sins and rose from the dead on the third day. Thank You for bearing my sins and giving me the gift of eternal life. I believe Your words are true and I now receive You into my life. I repent from the way I’ve been living. Be my Savior and Lord. I surrender to Your leadership in my life. Help me to live a holy life so that I exalt only You. Make me into the person You want me to be. In Jesus’ Name. Amen.”*

**New Members: Mike and Ann Marshall**