



The Episcopal Address to The Anglican Diocese of All Nations (ACNA)

HOLINESS OF LIFE

By

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Article XII, Of Good Works.

“Albeit that Good Works, which are the fruits of Faith, and follow after Justification, cannot put away our sins, and endure the severity of God’s Judgment; yet are they pleasing and acceptable to God in Christ, and do spring out necessarily of a true and lively Faith; insomuch that by them a lively Faith may be as evidently known as a tree discerned by the fruit.”

“In reality, holiness is the goal of our redemption. As Christ died in order that we may be justified, so we are justified in order that we may be sanctified and made holy.” – Dr. J.I. Packer

I. Introduction

Opening Prayer

O God, from whom all good proceeds: Grant that by your inspiration we may think those things that are right, and by your merciful guiding may do them; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

WELCOME

It is my pleasure to welcome you – Clergy and their wives, Noble Knights and Ladies, Laity, and our distinguished guests for the 2024 Diocesan Synod. We extend our warmest welcome to the plenary speaker for our 2024 Synod, the Rt. Rev’d Professor Julius & Mama Esther Wanyoike, Bishop of Thika, Anglican Church of Kenya. Welcome, my lord Bishop! Bishop Wanyoike will be speaking to us on the topic of revival later today.

GRATITUDE

We are very grateful to God for his many blessings in our lives. He has indeed been good to us. My gratitude goes to my wife Lilian, Mama All Nations for her unwavering support, encouragement, and patience in this episcopal ministry; and to Bishop Scott & Miriam Seely for their support and commitment to the Diocese. We appreciate the Synod Committee members (Bishop Scott Seely, Venerable Isaac Rehberg, and Canon Dr. Goodman), and Christ the King Anglican Church and its Rector, The Venerable Elias Mburu, for enabling this Synod to become a reality. We thank you all – Clergy, Laity, our Diocesan Standing Committee, Diocesan Chancellor Sir Solomon Kanu, and Legal Officers; all Diocesan Officers, Regional and Special Duties Archdeacons, Parishes, Knights and Ladies, and friends – for standing with us, praying for us, encouraging us, and financially supporting the Diocese over the past year. May the Lord bless you all in abundance!

We are grateful to the Lord and to Chancellor Job Serebrov for the pivotal role he played in the Diocese. Earlier this year Job resigned as Chancellor to pursue further academic interests. I have appointed Sir Solomon O. Kanu as our new Diocesan Chancellor. Sir Kanu has been the Deputy Chancellor of our Diocese since 2013, so he understands the Diocese and will serve faithfully in his new role.

Sir Kanu has been practicing law for 23 years. He holds a Bachelor's Degree in Economics, a Master's Degree in Banking and Business Finance, and a Juris Doctor degree from Western Michigan University, Cooley Law School. He is the Owner and Managing Attorney at Kanu and Associates P.C., a law firm in Phoenix, Arizona, focused primarily on immigration law and criminal defense. He is married to Lady Chinwe C. Kanu, Attorney at Law, and they have been blessed with three children. Sir Kanu is a born-again Christian, the Prime Minister of his autonomous community, and a Knight of St. Christopher. He served as our Diocesan Deputy Chancellor for approximately twelve years before his appointment this year as Chancellor of the Anglican Diocese of All Nations.

I have also appointed the former Senior Warden of St. Francis Cathedral, S. Clark Harmonson, Esq., as Deputy Chancellor of the Diocese. Clark Harmonson has been a Legal Officer of the Diocese since 2014. Clark grew up in Lubbock, Texas. He is a graduate of Texas Tech University (B.S. in Biology) and South Texas College of Law (J.D), where he graduated *summa cum laude*. Clark has practiced civil litigation in El Paso, Texas, since 2004 and is the owner of Harmonson Law Firm. Clark has significant experience handling civil matters and litigation involving religious institutions and churches. He has served on the vestry of St. Francis Anglican Cathedral in El Paso for many years and is the immediate past Senior Warden. Clark is married to Sheri Harmonson, and they have three lovely children.

We appreciate the willingness of Chancellor Kanu and Deputy Chancellor Harmonson to serve the Diocese in their respective new capacities.

ORDINATION & RECEPTION INTO THE DIOCESE

In the past year we have ordained Rev'd Dele Akintade Adebamiji, Rev'd Dr. Michael Storey, and Rev'd Maranzu Ugochukwu to the priesthood; and Rev'd Dr. Ogonna Nwankwo, Rev'd Dr. Wisdom Atulegwu, and Rev'd Justice Okoroafor to the Diaconate.

It is my pleasure to welcome the following clergy and congregations to our Diocese: Venerable Mark Ball, Rev'd Brendan Kimbrough, Rev'd Marc Omar, Rev'd Dr. Michael Storey, and Missio Dei Anglican Church in Houston, Texas; Rev'd John Goodman II and Christ Church of the Rio Grande Valley, Mission, Texas; Venerable Progress Chima Okoroafor and Our Savior Anglican Church in California; Venerable Joe Eze and New Testament Anglican Church in the Bay Area, California; Venerable Dr. Peter Johnston and Trinity Anglican Church, Lafayette, Louisiana; Venerable Dr. Chris Ozodi and Church of Faith in Wisconsin; Rev'd Captain Benson Kimani serving at Christ the King Anglican Church, Seattle, Washington; Venerable Samuel Fayomi (Canada); and Rev'd Maranzu Ugochukwu in Pennsylvania.

Please join me in welcoming them to our Diocese. The Anglican Diocese of All Nations (ADAN) is a Diocese in the Anglican Church in North America (ACNA). We are committed to a

Christ-centered, Biblically faithful, multi-cultural, multi-racial, and multi-ethnic ministry and mission in North America.

Currently, the Diocese has 75 clergy, 32 parishes, and four new church plants being organized in Texas, California, Pennsylvania, and Oregon. Our Diocese is committed to proclaiming Christ to All Nations – hence, we are exploring missional relationships with Anglicans in Africa and other areas of the world who have expressed interest in associating with, or becoming part of, our Diocese. Our Mission and Vision remain unchanged.

A. Mission Statement –

We are a fellowship of Christian believers whose mission is to make disciples of Christ by preaching the Biblical gospel of grace, faithfully teaching God’s Word to believers, and SUPPORTING one another in this mission and ministry of the Church to and for the glory of God alone.

B. Vision Statement –

Our vision is to plant, grow, and revitalize churches comprised of disciples of Jesus Christ from every nation, race, tribe, and tongue who are Christ-centered, Biblically faithful, mission-minded, Spirit-filled, holy, loving, and united under God for His glory and praise.

This Hymn written by John Oxenham (William Dunkerley —1785 -1854) reflects our Diocesan mission, vision and Values. It is Christ-centered, missional, and encourages unity in a racially and tribally diverse world.

1. In Christ there is no east or west,
in Him no south or north,
but one great fellowship of love
throughout the whole wide earth.
2. In Christ shall true hearts ev’rywhere
their high communion find.
His service is the golden cord
close binding humankind.
3. Join hands, then, people of the faith,
whate’er your race may be.
All children of the living God
are surely kin to me.
4. In Christ now meet both east and west,
in Him meet south and north.
All Christly souls are joined as one
throughout the whole wide earth.

As a Diocese we are committed to evangelism, making disciples of all nations, strengthening congregations, raising and equipping ordained and lay leaders, planting churches, equipping

parents, and evangelizing as well as discipling children, youth, and young adults with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We are also committed to expanding and strengthening Lay Ministry in the Diocese. Consequently, we have enhanced and clarified our Policies and Procedures regarding Licensed and Commissioned Lay Ministry, that is, Lay Missioners, Lay Catechists, Lay Readers, and Lay Evangelists. We will be proactive in their recruitment, training, supervision, and continuing professional education. Please take time to read the rest of the section on this.

Anglican Diocese of All Nations Licensed and Commissioned Lay Ministry Guidelines

Why does lay ministry matter?

The Biblical account shows the Lord started his church with the Apostles as the eleven disciples were sent out to preach, evangelize, baptize, and teach (Matthew 28). This quickly grew to about 120 at the day of Pentecost as all were filled with the Holy Spirit. Then to 3000 as Peter preached. A few chapters later we see the ordaining of Deacons to support the work of service to the needy. As the story of God's work in the early church unfolded, we begin to meet many doing ministry who were not among the Apostles and were not set apart specifically through the laying on of hands. Ananias healed and baptized Saul (who became Paul). Lydia opened her home in response to the Gospel. Priscilla and Aquila, a married couple, evangelized, helped plant churches, opened their home for the church in Corinth and Rome, and helped train Apollos, a gifted second-generation leader.

It is clear that the Church is founded and reformed through apostolic ministry, but that this ministry when it bears fruit always produces the whole church, which includes ordered male leadership with the laying on of hands and a large variety of male and female lay ministers doing the work of the Gospel in partnership and under apostolic authority. This can be compared to the life cycle of a fruit tree. Christ is the seed (John 12:24), the Apostles are the trunk of the tree, the branches are our ordained elders of priest and deacons, and the lay ministry is the varied and glorious leaves and fruit of the kingdom. Fruit is the way the Gospel seed spreads, while leaves bring support and nourishment to the branches and trunk. Today many treat lay and ordained ministry as though you can have one without the other. There is no place for this. Just as fruit is not against the tree from which it comes, the tree is not against the fruit. They are one fruit tree and when they work together well, they bear much fruit for the glory of God and the good of the world that desperately needs to hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

A church without lay ministry is like a tree without fruit (Luke 13:6-9). A tree with robust lay ministry and ordained ministry together is like a tree which, "when it has grown it is larger than all the garden plants and ... the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches." (Matthew 13:32)

Licensed Lay Ministry

The Anglican Diocese of All Nations recognizes four Lay Ministry roles:

- Lay Catechist
- Lay Evangelist
- Lay Reader
- Lay Missioner

These lay leadership roles provide ways to recognize, equip, and empower lay ministry in our congregations. Much of the qualifications and ministry gifting in these positions overlaps. These terms have been used in different ways historically, and even now they are used in different ways in the varying Anglican traditions represented in our Diocese. This document will provide clarity concerning our use of these terms going forward as we equip the saints for the work of ministry.

Lay Catechist –

A Lay Catechist is a person gifted, called, and trained to instruct believers in the Christian faith. The primary calling of the Lay Catechist is to teach and disciple. Historically, a Catechist would prepare new converts for Baptism. The Book of Common Prayer 2019 states in its preface to our baptismal service, “Adults and older children are to be instructed in the meaning of Baptism and the Christian faith.” This short sentence includes a great deal. We hold that this instruction should include the core of the Gospel as found in the Old and New Testaments, the teaching of the righteous laws of God as summarized in the Ten Commandments, and an understanding of the doctrine of the Church as stated in the Apostles and Nicene Creeds. A Lay Catechist must have a deep grasp of the truths of the faith and be able to explain them to others under the direction of their Rector or other ordained minister. They must be able and willing to work with congregants, both one-on-one and in groups, to teach the faith once handed down. A Lay Catechist may be asked to lead Bible studies, teach church history and doctrine, write blog posts, create and lead children’s education, and even preach from time to time as requested by the Rector.

Lay Evangelist –

The Lay Evangelist is the Catechist to the unbeliever. The evangelistic gifting comes in many forms but is recognized by its love for those far from Christ and those outside the church. A Lay Evangelist needs to be able to teach and instruct the complete faith just as a Lay Catechist. The Lay Evangelist is the one who often spearheads the mission of the church into the world. This gifting for this position not only focuses on the teaching of the Gospel but studies and practices the work of contextualizing and translating the Good news in a manner that our lost world can both hear and understand. Of necessity it will include an understanding of apologetics, and missional engagement with the neighborhoods that surround our churches. A Lay Evangelist can teach and preach within the church, too, but that work should usually be performed in the context of equipping the people of God to go on mission.

Lay Reader –

The Lay Reader is a position that serves the church in its worship of our one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This is typically a calling to serve and support the worship of the church in a liturgical context. This would include the reading of Scripture, distribution of Communion elements, intercessory prayer, and leading of Morning Prayer or other services as requested by the Rector. Since the Lay Reader often serves the whole congregation in worship, their consistency and character are of primary importance. They should be of good reputation among the people of God and faithful in their attendance and support for the other ministries of the church. A Lay Reader may also have a calling to visit the sick, take Communion to shut-ins, and lead the church in intercessory prayer.

Lay Missioner –

A Lay Missioner is one who has been authorized to lead a congregation as a lay person. They will often have many of the giftings found in the other three lay positions and it is ideal for them to serve, for a time, in one of the other positions before they are considered for the role of Lay Missioner. A Lay Missioner is often utilized as a church planter or in small congregations that for various reasons are not likely to have an ordained minister. Nursing home congregations, prison ministry, college campuses, apartment ministry, and congregations meeting as part of an existing parish but in a second language can all be good opportunities for a Lay Missioner. A Lay Missioner may teach, preach, pastor, lead worship services, and distribute communion consecrated by the priest under whom they serve. Because the role of Lay Missioner has so many similarities with the work of ordained clergy, particularly that of a Rector, this licensure is reserved exclusively for males.

Lay Ministry Guidelines:

Licensure and Commissioning

The roles of Lay Catechist and Lay Evangelist are licensed at the diocesan level but commissioned at the congregational level. This allows a Rector or other head of congregation to request a diocesan license for one of its leaders. The licensure requested should match as closely as possible the leader's role in the congregation.

Lay Readers and Lay Missioners are both licensed at the diocesan level. Their commissioning should be done by a Regional Archdeacon or one of our Bishops with the participation of the congregational Rector.

Diocesan Lay Licenses –

- Lay Catechist
- Lay Evangelist
- Lay Reader
- Diocesan Lay Commission
- Lay Missioner

How does Lay Ministry relate to Ordained Ministry?

Although most who are called to ordained ministry will begin serving in these lay roles, these roles are not part of the formal ordination process. It is expected that most who serve as Licensed Lay Ministers will not go on to ordination. The calling to ordained ministry has its own discernment process and its own particular requirements. Future ordained ministers who have trained and served well in these lay roles, however, will undoubtedly be more prepared to lead the church in generations to come.

Who Should be Considered for Diocesan Lay Licensure?

Diocesan level licensure is not required or recommended for every lay person serving in local congregations. Many lay people teach, engage in evangelism, and serve the various liturgical functions of the church. Those who have done these things well over time, that have positions of leadership amongst their peers, that have a hunger for more significant training, and that demonstrate godly character, however, should be considered for Diocesan level licensure.

All Lay Licenses:

- Have time limits and must be renewed every three years.
- Lay Catechist, Lay Evangelist, and Lay Reader are positions open to both men and women. Lay Missioner is open only to men.
- Are location based.
- Licensed Lay Ministry is authorized at a certain location or in a certain area. If a Licensed Lay Minister moves to another congregation or leaves his or her current congregation, their Licensed Ministry status or commission is ended immediately unless authorized by the Bishop to continue. They may apply for re-licensure by the Bishop and be commissioned in their new congregation. This may be done by written communication.
- Are under the direction of an ordained person.
- All licensed Lay Ministers will be under the direct supervision of their Rector or head of congregation, including Lay Missioners. An ordained person will be the Rector or Head of Congregation for ministries led by Lay Missioners.
- A Lay Ministry position holds no “rank” over other congregants. The supervising Rector, at his discretion, may ask for the Lay Minister to exercise some leadership function(s) within the parish, but all such requests are on behalf of the Rector and conditionally borrow the authority vested in the Rector by the Bishop of that congregation.
- Are normally awarded in a congregational context.
- Are all awarded at the Bishop’s direction.
- The Bishop may remove Lay Licensure or Commissioning at any time for any reason and may also limit or expand a person’s role in lay ministry.
- Require Godly Character. All licensed Lay Ministers must adhere to Biblical standards for a godly life as enumerated in the congregational and diocesan standards.
- Require humility. As ordained ministers know well, the gifts of God are an opportunity for pride to take root. Remember what the Lord taught his Apostles –

“When you have done all that you were commanded, say, ‘We are unworthy servants; we have only done what was our duty.’” (Luke 17:10)

Common Core Training –

All licensed lay ministry position holders are expected to have a common base and growing understanding of the Bible, church doctrine, church history, liturgical service, prayer, and appropriate pastoral behavior. This training will be offered across the diocese via Zoom. The first year of training is required for all licensed Lay Ministers. The second year of training is required for Lay Missioners and all who may be asked to preach. There is a third year of training required for those who apply for ordained ministry and are accepted as aspirants.

Application Process –

The Anglican Diocese of All Nations will establish an online application process for lay licensure. The process can only be initiated by a Rector or other ministers appointed by the Bishop. The online process shall include the following:

- An Application
- Spiritual Autobiography
- Background Check
- Signed agreement to conform to the ADAN code of conduct
- Online training requirements lists and access to the Common Core Training

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II. THE EPISCOPAL CHARGE TO THE DIOCESE: HOLINESS OF LIFE

Our theme for this Synod is “Be ye holy before the Lord” from 1 Peter 1:13-19. Here is the passage:

¹³ Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

¹⁴ As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance,

¹⁵ but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct,

¹⁶ since it is written, ‘You shall be holy, for I am holy.’

¹⁷ And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one’s deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile,

¹⁸ knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold,

¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.”

The Bible teaches without any equivocation that we are saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone to the glory of God alone. In God’s sovereign providence, when, by the effectual working of God’s electing and calling grace, we repent of sin and believe the Gospel, we are immediately saved from God’s eternal wrath of hell, justified by him, united to Christ, seated with Him in the heavenly places, reconciled to Him, rescued from the powers of Satan, sin, and death, delivered from the kingdom and domain of Satan and transferred into the kingdom of his beloved Son. In addition, we are granted access to the throne of grace, given the gifts of righteousness, eternal life, the Holy Spirit, and what Dr. J.I. Packer calls the greatest and highest gift of the New Covenant – the gift of adoption into the family of God thereby making us sons and daughters of the living God forever! Immediately at regeneration and conversion we are blessed by God with all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places through and in Christ! All of these blessings are granted and guaranteed to us on the basis of God’s grace alone and received by faith alone in Christ alone, apart from works of the Law. Theologians refer to these realities and benefits of the New Covenant in Christ as the indicatives of the Gospel.

This morning, however, I want to draw your attention to what I believe is the primary imperative of the Gospel, among other necessary imperatives such as evangelism and disciple-making. The primary imperative of the gospel is God’s call and command to us, his regenerate children, to live lives of holiness in the Church and in the world. I love the way Dr. J.I. Packer states this truth, “In reality, holiness is the goal of our redemption. As Christ died in order that we may be justified, so we are justified in order that we may be sanctified and made holy.” It has become increasingly important to address this subject in our contemporary world and Church because of the almost ubiquitous moral declension dogging the Church today. Kevin DeYoung noted that “There is a gap between our love for the gospel and our love for godliness.

This must change. It is not pietism, legalism, or fundamentalism to take holiness seriously. It's the way of all those who have been called to a holy calling by a holy God." Dr. J.I. Packer in his book, *Rediscovering Holiness*, lamented, "There was a time when all Christians laid great emphasis on God's call to holiness. But how different it is today! To listen to our sermons and to read the books we write, and then to watch the zany, worldly, quarrelsome way we behave, you would never imagine that at one time the highway of holiness was clearly marked out for Bible-believers." The church is embroiled and embattled by sin ranging from false teaching, lying, malice, hypocrisy, slander, gossip, alcohol abuse, power-mongering, position-seeking, pornography, sexual immorality, pride, deceit, anger, clamor, unforgiving hearts, abusive behaviors, and so on and so forth. The sins of omission and commission in thought, word, and deed dog our steps daily. While we do not believe in instantaneous perfect practical sanctification, we must underscore the fact that we must not continue to live in sin with impunity. Paul, in the Book of Ephesians and in his other epistles, noted that God's purpose of electing us in eternity and redeeming us in time includes holiness of life and the practice of good works. That's what the Apostle meant by walking "worthy of the Gospel." The clergy we have disciplined in this Diocese were not disciplined for their failure to believe the Gospel – all of them did. They were disciplined because they did not follow the Bible's command in Ephesians 4:1ff and Philippians 2:27-29 to "walk worthy of the Gospel" we claim to believe. Most of the problems we have in our churches and in the Anglican Communion arise from a failure to walk worthy of the Gospel. You can believe the Gospel and yet dishonor God thereby disqualifying yourself for ministry because of your ungodly life. This is probably the reason for the various warnings in the epistles written to Christians in the first century. John writes in 1 John 3:6-10, "No one who abides in him keeps on sinning; no one who keeps on sinning has either seen him or known him. Little children, let no one deceive you. Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as he is righteous. Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him; and he cannot keep on sinning, because he has been born of God. By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother." The saddest reality in our postmodern church is that many people think "unholiness" (or Antinomianism) is the new normal because God is a gracious God. One cannot read the apostolic writers of the first century like St. Paul, St. Peter, and St. John, the Church fathers like St. Augustine and Thomas Aquinas, Continental Reformers like John Calvin and Ulrich Zwingli, or Anglican Reformers like Archbishop Thomas Cranmer, Bishop Hugh Latimer, or the Caroline Divines like George Herbert and Jeremy Taylor, or even contemporary Reformed theologians like Dr. R.C. Sproul, Dr. J.I. Packer, Dr. John Stott, Dr. Sinclair Ferguson, and several others who have written books on holiness in response to the proclivity of Christians towards Antinomianism, and come away with the idea that calling the Church to holy living is unscriptural, unnecessary, and/or a surrender to legalistic works-righteousness.

According to Calvin, if you don't live a transformed life through the enabling power of the Holy Spirit, you do not belong to Christ. Those who claim to be Reformed and yet think otherwise are espousing heretical doctrine, says John Calvin.

"Those in whom the Spirit does not reign do not belong to Christ; therefore those who serve the flesh are not Christians, for those who separate Christ from His Spirit make Him like a dead

image or a corpse. Free remission of sins cannot be separated from the Spirit of regeneration. This would be, as it were, to rend Christ asunder.” Dr. Michael Reeves concurs: “The Reformers never took justification out of union with Christ. Martin Luther said that through faith in Christ, we receive the righteousness of Christ, or rather, we receive Christ himself. By receiving Christ himself, we receive his righteousness and his Spirit, who transforms us – meaning that if you’re united with Christ, and therefore have the righteousness of Christ, it is impossible for you not to be transformed. Justification was never taught by the mainstream Reformers as something that could leave you untransformed.”

Dr. John Stott has noted, “Some critics always thought this (that believers remain passive and inert in the whole process of salvation) and supposed that Paul’s doctrine of salvation by grace alone actually encourages us to continue in sin. They are entirely mistaken. Good works are indispensable to salvation – not as its ground or means, however, but as its consequence and evidence.” Even a cursory reading of Romans chapters 6, 8, and 12 will bear testimony to John Stott’s clarity and correct stance on this position. Several centuries earlier, the Reformer John Calvin made a similar point, “It is faith alone that justifies, but the faith that justifies can never be alone. I acknowledge that Jesus Christ not only justifies us by covering all our faults and sins but also sanctifies us by His Spirit, so that the two things – the free forgiveness of sins and reformation to a holy life – cannot be dissevered (severed) and separated from each other.”

Here is the exhortation of the Apostle Paul to first century Christians who were tempted to abuse God’s grace: “For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession who are zealous for good works. Declare these things; exhort and rebuke with all authority. Let no one disregard you.” Titus 2:11-15 (*cf.* Colossians 3:1-17)

Jude raised an alarm regarding this problem as well: “Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints. For certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ ... These are hidden reefs at your love feasts, as they feast with you without fear, shepherds feeding themselves; waterless clouds, swept along by winds; fruitless trees in late autumn, twice dead, uprooted; wild waves of the sea, casting up the foam of their own shame; wandering stars, for whom the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved forever. It was also about these that Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied, saying, ‘Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His holy ones, to execute judgment on all and to convict all the ungodly of all their deeds of ungodliness that they have committed in such an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things that ungodly sinners have spoken against him. These are grumblers, malcontents, following their own sinful desires; they are loud-mouthed boasters, showing favoritism to gain advantage.’ But you must remember, beloved, the predictions of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ. They said to you, ‘In the last time there will be scoffers, following their own ungodly passions.’ It is these who cause divisions, worldly people, devoid of the Spirit. But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy

Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life.” (Jude 1: 14-21)

Despite clear Biblical teaching that we are elected and called by God to holy living, Antinomianism and ungodliness continue to plague the Church and cripple our effectiveness in ministry and Mission. Unfortunately, it appears that many evangelical and conservative Christians are fine with it. We, however, will not be fine with ungodliness in our Diocese. *Amen.* The reason is obvious: the Lord does not want us to play Christianity as Soren Kierkegaard put it in his book titled “Articles in the Fatherland” in the 19th century. Rather, the Lord wants us to practice true Christianity. That is, the Christianity that calls us to repentance and faith in Christ for forgiveness of sin, transformation, and holiness of life in Christ. We must live holy lives. What is holiness?

A. The Meaning of Holiness

What, then, is holiness? According to Bishop J.C. Ryle, “Holiness is the habit of being of one mind with God, according as we find his mind described in Scripture. It is the habit of agreeing in God’s judgment, hating what He hates, loving what He loves, and measuring everything in this world by the standard of his word.” Arthur David Canales tells us that the English word “holiness” stems from the Old English word ‘haligne’ which means “without blemish” or “without injury”; therefore, the English word “holy” is an English equivalent for the Hebrew word ‘qds’ (qodesh) and the Greek word ‘hagios,’ with both the Hebrew and Greek terms having an added sense of separation or consecration. God is pure, unadulterated holiness, and for Christians, Jesus the Christ is the personal fulfillment of God’s holiness on earth and the paradigmatic figure for Christian holiness. Holiness is the primary characteristic and fundamental quality of God. Holiness is God’s primordial essence and eternal being. Consequently, by extension, those people who earnestly search after God or seek God’s goodness are extended the quality of holiness by proxy from God. Holiness derives solely from God because God is the author, creator, and disseminator of holiness. Holiness is a divine attribute that is bestowed upon God’s followers and those who desire to share in God’s gratuitous gift of holiness: “But as He who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in every aspect of your conduct, for it is written, ‘Be holy because I [am] holy’” (1 Peter 1:15–16). In other words, Christians are called to be holy.” In Christ, God declares us holy and through Christ, by the Holy Spirit, he progressively makes us holy in practice. Dr. Wayne Grudem states that “Sanctification is a progressive work of God in man that makes us more and more free from sin and like Christ in our actual lives.” Holiness is conformity to the character of God and obedience to his will.” As Charles Colson says, “It is the complete surrender of self in obedience to the will and service of God.” Mother Teresa summarized holiness as the complete “acceptance of the will of God. Christian holiness involves caring for the needy and loving one another as He loved us.” Holiness also refers to the believer’s condition and conduct. It is practical. Nineteenth-century Scottish theologian John Brown said that holiness “does not consist in mystic speculations, enthusiastic fervors, uncommanded austerities, it consists in thinking as God thinks and willing as God wills.”

Let me expand on those definitions.

1. Holiness is the divine act at our conversion in which God sets us apart from the world to Himself.

This is called Positional Sanctification, that is, our position as saints before God wherein we are cleansed, separated from the world, and set apart by God, for God. In Colossians 3:12, Christians are referred to as "... God's chosen ones, holy and beloved." Peter wrote, "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light." (1 Peter 2:9)

Throughout the New Testament, Christians are addressed as 'saints' set apart for God. What a privilege! He separates us from the world and consecrates us to Himself. When we turned to Christ, God set us apart for himself to use us as He sees fit. We belong to Him. We don't belong to the world anymore, or even to ourselves. We are holy unto the Lord. We are His temple in which He dwells. He puts his stamp of ownership over us individually and corporately.

It must be understood that His sanctification of us is real and not a legal fiction. Here is how Dr. R.C. Sproul explained it: "Our sanctification begins the moment we have faith and are justified. We must remember that a justified person is a changed person. One who has real faith is regenerate and indwelt by the Holy Spirit. The effect of this change is not only necessary and inevitable, but immediate. If no fruit follows, then no faith is present. If no faith is present, then there is no justification." In other words, if there is no fruit of obedience to God's Word, then that is indicative that the person does not have saving faith, justification, and sanctification. If, eventually, there is no fruit of good works, then there is no glorification because there was no saving faith, regeneration, and justification in the first place.

Arminians believe that justification is the result of faith plus works. As Dr. R.C. Sproul further noted, "In Reformed Theology, justification is the result of faith alone, a faith that always produces works. Antinomianism teaches justification by faith minus works." Reformed Theology rejects both the Arminian and the Antinomian views. At justification, God sets us apart unto Himself – He sanctifies us and begins the process of making us holy in practice, conforming us to His moral image.

Dr. Michael Reeves reminds us that "The Reformers never took justification out of union with Christ. Martin Luther said that through faith in Christ, we receive the righteousness of Christ, or rather, we receive Christ himself. By receiving Christ himself, we receive his righteousness and his Spirit, who transforms us – meaning that if you're united with Christ, and therefore have the righteousness of Christ, it is impossible for you not to be transformed. Justification was never taught by the mainstream Reformers as something that could leave you untransformed."

2. Holiness is progressive conformity to the moral character and purposes of God through faith and obedience to his Word in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Paul, writing to Christians, exhorts us to "... be imitators of God, as beloved children." Ephesians 5:1. This holy imitation of God implies that holy living is synergistic – a synergy of divine power and human effort in which we strive, by His power, to bear and grow in the fruit of the Holy Spirit. The fruit of the Spirit is a reflection of the moral character of God to which

we conform by the power of the Holy Spirit himself: “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.” (Galatians 5:22-23)

The Holy Spirit produces this fruit by empowering us, guiding us, and prompting us. As we cooperate and obey His Word and His prompting in our hearts these fruits of divine character are born in us in increasing measure. Our Lord Jesus noted this in his Upper Room Discourse in John 15: “Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in Me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.” John 15:4-5. We must be in, and abide in Christ to bear fruit. Self-reliance and self-effort are insufficient and always lead to frustration. We must work with God. Peter (the Apostle) explained this synergy:

“His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us to His own glory and excellence, by which He has granted to us His precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire. For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (2 Peter 1:3-8)

Theologians use two words to describe our obedience:

-- The first word is Mortification:

This is the negative aspect of holiness – the “DON’T’s.” It means to put to death, avoid, and separate oneself from sins and the temptations that lead to sin. It is “putting off” of sinful habits and its various manifestations. Sin manifests itself in thoughts, words, desires, motivations, attitudes, actions, and inactions. “Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. On account of these the wrath of God is coming. In these you too once walked, when you were living in them. But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all.” (Colossians 3:5-11; Ephesians 4:17-5:7; Galatians 5:19-21; 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1)

The Lord wants us to abandon sin, including drunkenness, gossip, racism, tribalism, abusive behavior, hypocrisy, unforgiveness, pride, power-mongering, position-seeking, pornography, adultery, fornication, homosexual sins, idolatry, and so on and so forth. This is really the Lord’s call to daily repentance and self-denial. What is repentance? J.I. Packer explains: “Repentance is more than just sorrow for the past; repentance is a change of mind and heart, a new life of denying self and serving the Savior as King in self’s place ... More than once, Christ

deliberately called attention to the radical break with the past that repentance involves. ‘If any man will come after Me, let him DENY HIMSELF, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me ...’ ‘Whosoever will LOSE HIS LIFE FOR MY SAKE, the same (but only he) shall save it.’ (Luke 9:23-24, cf. Luke 14:27, 33) ... The repentance that Christ requires of His people consists in a settled refusal to set any limit to the claims which He may make on their lives.”

-- The second word is Vivification:

This is the positive aspect of holiness – the “DO’s.” It refers to the process of awakening, putting on, and practicing the virtues of the faith – in other words, actively clothing ourselves with holy and godly habits (Colossians 3:12-17; 2 Peter 1:3-13). Dr. J.I. Packer wrote, “this positive side of holiness is maintaining of loyalty to God and the living of a life which shows forth to others qualities of faithfulness, gentleness, goodwill, kindness, forbearance, and uprightness on the model of God’s own display of these qualities in His gracious dealings with us.” In Colossians 3:12-17, the apostle Paul wrote, “Put on then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.”

In the sanctification process the Holy Spirit leads and enables us to bear the fruit of the Spirit as we cooperate with Him. It is worth repeating: “... the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.” Galatians 5:22-24 (*cf.* John 15:1-17; Ephesians 2:10; Ephesians 4:1-6, 24)

It is important to remind ourselves that holiness is both an internal and external way of being and living. It is not external behavioral modification therapy. God changes us from the heart. God’s holiness is transformation that effects change from the inside to the outside. Knowing this protects us from an external, showy, and pharisaic holiness that focuses on a narrow outward conformity with one’s favorite religious and theological clan, which, in the end, leads to pure and unvarnished hypocrisy.

3. Holiness involves doing good works: practical good for the benefit of others both in private and in public.

In practical terms the tradition of the Church calls us to the Works of Mercy (Corporeal & Spiritual):

The Works of Mercy are divided into two categories: The Corporeal Works of Mercy (dealing with the body) and the Spiritual Works of Mercy (dealing with the mind, heart, and soul). Just as corporeal works of mercy are directed towards relieving corporeal (bodily) suffering, the aim of spiritual works of mercy is to relieve spiritual suffering. The Works of Mercy are an opportunity for Christians to give practical witness to Christ in the world.

-- The corporeal works of mercy:

To feed the hungry.
To give water to the thirsty.
To clothe the naked.
To shelter the homeless.
To care and visit the sick.
To visit the imprisoned or ransom the captive.
To bury the dead.

-- The spiritual works of mercy:

To instruct the ignorant.
To counsel the doubtful.
To admonish the sinners.
To bear patiently with those who wrong us.
To forgive offenses.
To comfort the afflicted.
To pray for the living and give thanks to God for the faithful departed.

These all involve helping people in need: the alien, the underprivileged, the displaced and disenfranchised, widows, orphans, and the destitute, etc. As John Wesley said, there is nothing more unchristian than a solitary Christian who ignores those around him or her. We need to reach out to help people, our preferred political parties and ideologies notwithstanding. We are first and foremost Christians, and we should act accordingly (Matthew 25:31-46; Acts 11:27-30; James 2:14-17; 1Peter 2:12,15; 1John 3:16-19). Jesus healed the sick, cleansed lepers, fed the hungry, and set free those in bondage to demonic power. He commands us to help people in need. Here is Jesus describing the Day of Reckoning, "Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave Me food, I was thirsty and you gave Me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed Me, I was naked and you clothed Me, I was sick and you visited Me, I was in prison and you came to Me.' Then the righteous will answer him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? And when did we see You a stranger and welcome You, or naked and clothe You? And when did we see You sick or in prison and visit You?' And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these My brothers, you did it to Me.'" (Matthew 25:34-40)

4. Holiness is a daily offering (consecration) of oneself to God.

A Christian who desires to live holy will soon realize that he has to make a decision to surrender to God every single day! As the Bible says in Romans 12:1-2, we must present ourselves as a living sacrifice to God: "I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect." Romans 12:1-2. You say to God every day, "I'm here to do your bidding. Use me Lord!" Consecration is a daily surrender, oblation, and laying down of our lives and plans on

the altar of God. It is opening all the doors into our lives for Him to come in and do what He wants to do with us and in us.

Richard Baxter said it well: holiness is “Nothing else but the habitual and predominant devotion and dedication of soul, and body, and life, and all that we have to God; and esteeming, and loving, and serving, and seeking Him, before all the pleasures and prosperity of the flesh.”

Bishop J.C. Ryle, 19th century Bishop of Liverpool, gave us a succinct profile of a holy person:

- A holy man will strive to be like our Lord Jesus Christ.
- A holy man will endeavour to shun every known sin, and to keep every known commandment.
- A holy man will follow after meekness, long-suffering, gentleness, patience, kind tempers, government of his tongue. He will bear much, forbear much, overlook much, and be slow to talk of standing on his rights.
- A holy man will follow after temperance and self-denial. He will labour to mortify the desires of his body – to crucify his flesh with his affections and lusts – to curb his passions – to restrain his carnal inclinations, lest at any time they break loose.
- A holy man will follow after charity and brotherly kindness. He will endeavour to observe the golden rule of doing as he would have men do to him, and speaking as he would have men speak to him. He will be full of affection towards his brethren – towards their bodies, their property, their characters, their feelings, their souls.
- A holy man will follow after a spirit of mercy and benevolence towards others. He will not stand all the day idle. He will not be content with doing no harm – he will try to do good.
- A holy man will follow after purity of heart. He will dread all filthiness and uncleanness of spirit, and seek to avoid all things that might draw him into it.
- A holy man will follow after the fear of God.
- A holy man will follow after humility. He will desire, in lowliness of mind, to esteem all others better than himself.
- A holy man will follow after faithfulness in all the duties and relations in life.
- A holy man will follow after spiritual mindedness. He will endeavour to set his affections entirely on things above, and to hold things on earth with a very loose hand.
- Holiness is the habit of being of one mind with God.

It is encouraging to hear this from an Anglican Bishop! I hope (and trust) that we will follow his example.

There should be no doubt in anyone’s mind that living a holy life is difficult in our modern world. We are bombarded by cultural messages in both church and society telling us that we are wonderful, and that we have no need to change anything in our lives because thinking there is something that requires change in us would put a dent on our much-cherished self-esteem! In his book, *Road to Character* (Random Press: 2015), David Brooks writes, “We have seen a broad shift from a culture of humility to the culture of what you might call the Big Me, from a culture that encouraged people to think humbly of themselves to a culture that

encouraged people to see themselves as the center of the universe.” He further observes, “In 1950, the Gallup Organization asked high school seniors if they considered themselves to be a very important person. At that point, 12 percent said yes. The same question was asked in 2005, and this time, it was 80 percent.”

Brooks comments, “As I looked around the popular culture I kept finding the same messages everywhere: You are special. Trust yourself. Be true to yourself ... This is the Gospel of self-trust.” It is a self-centered, self-congratulating, and plain, unvarnished Gospel of conceit. We must reject it.

Instead, we are called to believe the Gospel that transforms and leads to holy living. Why?

5. Reasons for Holy Living

There are several reasons “why” we should live a holy life before God in the world. Let me draw your attention to three of them.

- a. God commands us (and expects us) to be holy.

If that is true – and it is true – then holiness is not an option for Christians.

Peter said so: “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)

Paul said so: “I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.” (Romans 12:1-2)

“The Lord knows those who are His,” and “Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness.” (2 Timothy 2:18-19)

“Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God.” (2 Corinthians 7:1)

In Ephesians 2:10, Paul wrote: “For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. He created us, redeemed us and is at work us in order for us to do the good works of holy living.”

“What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? We were buried therefore with Him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.” (Romans 6:1-4)

“Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as

those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness. For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace. What then? Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness? But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness. I am speaking in human terms, because of your natural limitations. For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification.” (Romans 6:12-19)

“Finally, then, brothers, we ask and urge you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God, just as you are doing, that you do so more and more. For you know what instructions we gave you through the Lord Jesus. For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality; that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor, not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God.” (1 Thessalonians 4:1-5)

Many are confused about God’s will for them. Here it is: He wants and commands us to do good works and to be holy. As John Stott put it, “Jesus never concealed the fact that His religion included a demand as well as an offer. Indeed, the demand was as total as the offer was free. If He offered men His salvation, He also demanded their submission. He gave no encouragement whatever to thoughtless applicants for discipleship. He brought no pressure to bear on any inquirer. He sent irresponsible enthusiasts away empty.”

In an essay titled “Called to Holiness: Holiness in Modern Church Teaching,” Arthur David Canales wrote: “The call to holiness is not a new idea. The Book of Leviticus encourages the People of God to be holy: ‘Be holy, for I, the LORD, your God, am holy’ (Leviticus 19:2). In another ecclesial document – *Ecclesia in America* – Pope John Paul II addressed the fundamental and universal call to holiness for every baptized Christian. The Pope noted: ‘To be holy is to be like God and to glorify His name in the works which we accomplish in our lives (cf. Matthew 5:16). On the path of holiness, Jesus Christ is the point of reference and the model to be imitated: He is ‘the Holy One of God,’ and was recognized as such (cf. Mark 1:24). It is [Jesus] who teaches us that the heart of holiness is love, which leads even to giving our lives for others (cf. John 15:13). Therefore, to imitate the holiness of God, as it was made manifest in Jesus Christ His Son, ‘is nothing other than to extend in history His love, especially towards the poor, the sick, and the needy (cf. Luke 10:25).’” To become holy is to live as Jesus lived: for others, for the Church, and for God. It is Jesus the Christ who points the way to holiness.

The Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) also exhorted Catholics to pursue the universal call to holiness. The fifth chapter of Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (*Lumen Gentium*, 1964) is titled “The Call to Holiness.” The call to holiness as described in Church is not a simple suggestion nor is it merely ornamental, but it is in fact a constitutive element of living an authentic Catholic life. The document states, “Holiness of the Church is constantly shown forth in the fruits of grace which the Spirit produces in the faithful ... it is quite clear that all Christians in any state or walk of life are called to the fullness of Christian life and to the

perfection of love, and by this holiness a more human manner of life is fostered also in earthly society.” The document equates perfection with holiness, hence, Catholics are called to the way of perfection, which is modeled by Jesus of Nazareth who preached and practiced holiness. Whatever state of life or vocation a person is called to – married, single, ordained, or religious life – the call to holiness is not an abstract “pie in the sky” mandate, but a reality that Catholics are called to strive toward, and when we stumble and fall, we are called to get up, dust ourselves off by repentance, and continue to embark upon our lifelong pilgrimage to perfection. Everyone, every day, is called to vigorously pursue holiness, as it is not the domain of a cultic group but required of every person.

The U.S. Catholic Bishops’ document, *Economic Justice for All*, challenges Catholics to lead a life of holiness that not only is private but also reaches out and serves society. The document reads: “Holiness is not limited to the sanctuary or to moments of private prayer; it is a call to direct our whole heart and life toward God and according to God’s plan for this world. For the laity, holiness is achieved in the midst of the world, in family, in community, in friendships, in work, in leisure, in citizenship. Through their competency and by their activity, lay men and women have the vocation to bring the light of the Gospel to economic affairs, ‘so that the world may be filled with the Spirit of Christ and may more effectively attain its destiny in justice, in love, and in peace.’ Living everyday holiness takes on many forms: prophetic witness, giving to charities, serving at a soup kitchen, tutoring children, celebrating Sunday Eucharist, praying for others, even curbing waste and living frugally.”

b. Holiness or obedience to God is the evidence that we know and love Him.

John wrote: “And by this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. Whoever says ‘I know Him’ but does not keep His commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, but whoever keeps His word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in Him; whoever says he abides in Him ought to walk in the same way in which He walked.” (1 John 2:3-6)

“This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.” (1 John 1:5-7)

“See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Beloved, we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when He appears we shall be like him, because we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who thus hopes in Him purifies himself as He is pure. Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness. You know that He appeared in order to take away sins, and in Him there is no sin. No one who abides in Him keeps on sinning; no one who keeps on sinning has either seen Him or known Him. Little children, let no one deceive you. Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as He is righteous. Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God’s seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God. By

this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother.” (1 John 3:1-10)

John Calvin noted, “Those who are justified by true faith prove their justification by obedience and good works, not by a bare and imaginary semblance of faith. In one word, he (James 2) is not discussing the mode of justification, but requiring that the justification of believers shall be *operative*. And as Paul contends that men are justified without the aid of works, so James will not allow any to be regarded as justified who are destitute of good works.”

Scottish Reformed theologian John Murray stated: “Faith alone justifies but a justified person with faith alone would be a monstrosity which never exists in the kingdom of grace. Faith works itself out through love (Galatians 5:6). And faith without works is dead (James 2:17-20).”

According to Dr. R.C. Sproul, “The relationship of faith and good works is one that may be distinguished but never separated ... if good works do not follow from our profession of faith, it is a clear indication that we do not possess justifying faith. The Reformed formula is, ‘We are justified by faith alone but not by a faith that is alone.’ At issue, here is the question of genuine faith. True faith is never alone. It always manifests itself in works. Works that flow out of faith, however, are in no way the ground of our justification. They contribute nothing of merit before God. The only ground or basis of our justification is the merit of Christ. Nor is faith itself a meritorious work or the ground of our justification. Faith is a gift of God’s grace, so it possesses no merit of its own. Like James, Luther opposed Antinomianism. Saving faith is not dead. It is a vital or living faith (*fides viva*). Live faith produces real works. If no works follow from our profession of faith, this proves that our faith is not alive, but is what Calvin called an ‘imaginary semblance.’”

Obedience is the evidence of our love for Jesus. “Jesus answered him, ‘If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and We will come to him and make our home with him. Whoever does not love Me does not keep My words. And the word that you hear is not mine but the Father’s who sent Me.’” (John 14:22-24)

C.H. Spurgeon noted, “Not that our salvation should be the effect of our work, but our work should be the evidence of our salvation.”

Holiness, that is, obedience to God, is not an optional way of life for Christians or for superior Saints, and neither is it simply necessary because it bears witness to the reality of our salvation – it prepares us for the happiness of heaven. The fact is that if we do not desire holiness here out of love for Christ, how will we be able to enjoy a heaven that is perfect holiness? Dr. Kevin DeYoung warns: “If ungodliness is your delight here on earth, what will please you in heaven, where all is clean and pure? You would not be happy there if you are not holy here. Or as Spurgeon put it, “Sooner could a fish live upon a tree than the wicked in Paradise.”

c. Holiness is necessary for effectiveness in ministry.

The indomitable C.S. Lewis reminded the moribund, establishment-driven Christian world that: “The Church exists for nothing else but to draw men into Christ, to make them little

christ. If they are not doing that, all the cathedrals, clergy, missions, sermons ... are simply a waste of time.”

That is true – and it is why at every Synod we remind ourselves of this by focusing on Mission and Church planting on the first day of our Synod. But we cannot plant and sustain new God-honoring churches if we do not honestly address the issues of holiness in our personal lives and in the church. We must come face-to-face with the sins of arrogance, divisiveness, racism, ethnic bigotry, sexual immorality, lying, deception, duplicity, sloth, corruption, hypocrisy, impenitence, gossip, abusive behavior, malice, slander, power-mongering, anger, resentment, and selfishness, among other vices in the Church. If we don't address this issue, our ministry of discipleship and church planting will be undermined and possibly jeopardized. Thomas Merton gave the following disturbing and sobering word of counsel “Do not be too quick to condemn the man who no longer believes in God: for it is perhaps your own coldness and avarice and mediocrity and materialism and selfishness that have chilled his faith.” That is huge. May the Lord help us not to be a hindrance to sinners coming to Christ. The 19th century Anglican Bishop of Liverpool, Bishop J.C. Ryle, told the story of a trader who was disillusioned by crafty Christians: “I cannot see the use of so much religion,” said the unbelieving trader; “I observe that some of my customers are always talking about the Gospel, and faith, and election, and the blessed promises and so forth; and yet these very people think nothing of cheating me of pence and half-pence, when they have an opportunity. Now, if religious persons can do such things, I do not see what good there is in religion.”

As Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones put it: “When the church is absolutely different from the world, she invariably attracts it. It is then that the world is made to listen to her message, though it may hate it at first.” You will ruin your church-planting initiatives by your lifestyle, no matter how much fervor and effort you manage to muster. Arrogance, lying, sexual sin, refusal to avoid things that have an appearance of evil, stealing, and dishonest, unreliable character will bring dishonor to God. Sin has ruined many ministers and it will ruin your ministry if you don't pay attention to your words and conduct. Paul, writing to Timothy, gives this vital instruction, “Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers.” (1 Timothy 4:16)

Let me give you a word of exhortation to our Clergy, Catechists, and Lay ministers: Holiness of Life is what confirms your claim to be a follower of Christ and it is essential to fruitfulness in Christian ministry. Michael Taylor writes, “This is the sense of 1 Peter 2:12, which says ‘keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.’” And Bishop J.C. Ryle expressed the importance of such holiness well when he wrote: “I believe that far more is done for Christ's kingdom by the holy living of believers than we are at all aware of. There is a reality about such living which makes men feel, and obliges them to think. It carries a weight and influence with it that nothing else can give. It makes religion beautiful, and draws men to consider it, like a lighthouse seen afar off ... Your life is an argument that none can escape ... I believe there is far more harm done by unholy and inconsistent Christians than we are aware of. Such men are among Satan's best allies. They pull down by their lives what ministers build with their lips. They cause the chariot wheels of the Gospel to drive heavily. They supply the children of this world with a never-ending excuse for remaining as they are ... Let us take heed lest the blood of souls should be required at our hands. From murder of souls by inconsistency

and loose walking, good Lord, deliver us! Oh, for the sake of others, if for no other reason, let us strive to be holy!”

William Bates (1625-1699), writing about the Christian pastor, said, “And as they must teach what they learn from the Gospel so they must live as they teach. If they are sensual and worldly, how can their prayers ascend with an acceptance to God, and descend with a blessing to the people? ... So if the tenor of their lives be not correspondent to the sermons, it will destroy the force of the most inflaming eloquence, and teach the doctrines of the greatest purity without efficacy.” He compares evangelical pastors to “the luminaries of heaven, that by their light, heat, influences, are so beneficial to the lower world.”

This view is also reflected by Derek Tidball in his commentary on Martin Bucer’s perspective on pastoral ministry: “The aim of elders (by elders, Bucer meant shepherd-teachers), who had taken over the pastoral ministry from the apostles, was to ensure the continuing discipleship of those within the church and to enable them to grow in holiness and to reach adulthood in Christ. This was to be done through supplying any lack they had in their understanding of life through teaching, warning, punishment (disciplinary action), comfort and pardon.”

Similarly, St Gregory of Nazanzus highlighted the importance of priests being good moral examples to the church: “A man must himself be cleansed, before cleansing others: himself become wise, that he may make others wise; become light, and then give light: draw near to God, and so bring others near; be hallowed, then hallow them; be possessed of hands to lead others by the hand, be possessed of wisdom to give advice ... A priest, in order to rule, needs to be free from evil.” But more than that, says Gregory, “he must be eminent in goodness. He must live by a higher standard so that he can draw people by the influence of persuasion with gentleness, not by oppression and force.”

Gregory insists that a pastor “must carefully consider how necessary it is for him to maintain a life of rectitude. It is necessary, therefore, that he should be pure in thought, exemplary in conduct, discreet in keeping silence, profitable in speech, in sympathy a near neighbour to everyone, in contemplation exalted above all others, a humble companion to those who lead good lives, erect in his zeal for righteousness against the vices of sinners.” In other words, the conduct of a pastor should be above average in excellence of character, and in doing good.

The Church father, St. Basil, offered a list of virtues necessary to Christian leaders ‘guiding’ people who are ‘making their way toward God.’ “He has to be a person with good character, bearing witness by his own deeds to his love for God, familiar with the Holy Scripture, recollected, free from avarice, good, quiet man, tranquil, pleasing to God, a lover of the poor, mild, forgiving, laboring hard for the spiritual growth of disciples, without vainglory or arrogance, impervious to flattery, not given to vacillation and preferring God to everything else.”

Gregory the Great adds to the list of virtues. “It is necessary, therefore, that he should be pure in thought, exemplary in conduct, discreet in keeping silence, profitable in speech, in sympathy a near neighbour to everyone, in contemplation exalted above all others, a humble companion to those who lead good lives, erect in his zeal for righteousness against the vices of sinners. He must not be remiss in his care for the inner life by pre-occupation with the external; nor must he in his solicitude for what is internal, fail to give attention to the external.”

Bishop Gilbert Burnet is practical and direct in his comments. “Therefore a priest must not only abstain from gross scandals, but keep at the furthest distance from them. He must not only not be drunk, but he must not fit a tippling, nor go to taverns or ale houses, except some urgent occasion demands it. He must not only abstain from acts of lawlessness, but from all indecent behaviour and unbecoming raillery.”

George Herbert gave similar advice to clergy in *The Country Parson*. “The priest must free himself from the love of the world, from the vanities and disorders of the world; from hypocrisy and cowardice; from haughtiness, impatient and insolent temper, and from peevishness of spirit. There are other virtues that clergy need to develop. They include gentleness, meekness, humility, charitableness, compassionate temper, singularity of mind and simplicity.”

Jeremy Taylor was practical and direct, too. He advised clergy to remember that: “It is your great duty, and tied on you by many obligations, that you be exemplary in your lives, and be patterns and precedents to your flocks; lest it be said unto you, ‘Why takest thou My law into thy mouth seeing thou hatest to be reformed thereby?’ He that lives an idle life, may preach with truth and reason, or as did the Pharisees; but not as Christ, or as one having authority.”

His (Jeremy Taylor’s) advice becomes intensely practical as he advises clergy not to be servants of passion, be it anger, desire, or pride. They must avoid covetousness, reproachful behavior, greed, litigiousness, exaction of offerings or customary wages and worldliness. Ministers must learn to preserve Christian simplicity and ingenuity. They must observe the Golden Rule. They are to be fearless, loving their congregations and avoiding what is today known as ‘sheep stealing.’ “Entertain no persons into your assemblies from other parishes unless upon great occasion, or in the destitution of a ministry, or by contingency and seldom (occasional) visits or with leave (permission from the home pastor); lest the labour of thy brother be discouraged, and thyself be thought to preach Christ out of envy, and not of goodwill,” he noted.

Likewise, George Herbert waxes eloquent, “The Country Parson is exceedingly exact in his life, being holy, just, prudent, temperate, bold, grave in all his ways.” Herbert identified three major areas the parson must take heed: “Patience in regard to afflictions; mortification in regard to lusts and affections and the stupefying and deadening of all the clamorous powers of the soul; and thirdly in keeping his word as an honest man.” He added, “the parson’s yea is yea and nay, nay; and his apparel plain but reverend, and clean, without spots, or dust or smell; the purity of his mind breaking out, and dilating itself even to his body, clothes and habitation.”

Anglican clergy are therefore expected to take the lead in the moral life by living lives that are free from criminal behavior, sexual harassment, immorality, homosexual practices, disobedience, and disrespect to the for godly authority. They are expected to uphold the virtue of promise-keeping with respect to their Ordination vows.

Holiness is a necessary characteristic of those who want to make disciples for Christ. For us to make holy disciples who sit at the feet of Christ to learn as they follow him daily, we ourselves need to be holy disciples who sit at the feet of Christ to learn as we follow him daily rather than heroes who blaze their own way to victories of their own. Sometimes our pride index goes up because we are just too good to be disciples who learn to follow the master daily. We want to

be super apostles very quickly and buy new vestments and hang out with the big names. Is it time to move on from being disciples to become heroes and masters?! No, Jesus commissioned the Church to make disciples who serve the Master. We are called to make disciples who follow Christ in the obedience of faith, not to make heroes and hero-makers who are independent trailblazers searching for personal glory. After we are done, we say to Master Jesus “we are unworthy servants.” That’s what Jesus said in Luke 17:10: “So you also, when you have done all that you were commanded, say, ‘We are unworthy servants;[c] we have only done what was our duty.’”

We should live holy lives because the absence of holiness is a sign of sinful rebellion, reflects our non-conformity to the image of Christ, hinders and obfuscates the Gospel message, and can eventually destroy the effectiveness of our witness and ministries.

B. Growth in Holiness

The Christian on the highway of holiness must be moving toward perfection – “You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Matthew 5:48). In regard to growth in holiness we must always guard against the two ditches of “Activism and Quietism.” A healthy Christian cannot be spiritually static. Instead, he or she is growing and maturing into the full stature of Christ. The apostle Peter exhorted Christians, “You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability. But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.” (2 Peter 3:17-18). As Dr. Sinclair Ferguson reminds us: “The Christian life is like riding a bicycle; if you don’t keep peddling you will eventually fall off.”

So how should and how can the Christian believer “pedal” the bicycle of faith in order to grow in holiness?

1. First, recognize and accept the fact that salvation is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone to the glory of God alone. (Ephesians 2:1-9)

We must not lose sight of this truth on the pathway of holiness. Let me quickly explain the Biblical way of salvation with these theological formulas that capture the theological differences regarding Salvation (or Justification) in today’s Christian church:

- a. Faith in Christ + Good Works = Justification (Arminianism)
- b. Faith in Christ = Justification – Good Works (Antinomianism)
- c. Faith in Christ = Justification + Good Works (Biblical & Reformed Theology)

The third of these formulas is the correct view of Justification and Sanctification from the Bible. God’s Grace alone through Faith alone in Christ alone leads to Justification and the good works of holy living!

This is how we must understand the call to holiness from the very beginning. If you do not do so you will rely on your own efforts, inevitably sliding back into legalism, frustration, self-loathing, or “easy-believism” (Antinomianism).

My point here is that on the highway of holiness there is always mercy and forgiveness for the sinner, because it is by grace alone that we make it to heaven. Remember in Ephesians 2:1-10, the apostle Paul explains our spiritual biography – what we were before we met Christ, or rather, before Christ rescued us; how we became Christians, and what we are now because of Christ. In vv. 1-3, he tells us that our lives before we knew Christ were characterized by deadness in sin and bondage to Satan, and, consequently, were subject to the wrath of God. Then in vv. 4-9 he goes on to describe how God, instead of giving us what we deserve – eternal punishment in hell – decided in His gracious mercy to save us from our slavery to sin, Satan, and eternal wrath! He drew us to Christ, he forgave us, and he seated us with Christ in the heavenly places. We’ve been saved by grace through faith, not by works. Totally undeserved! Alexander Whyte put it well: “Love may exist between equals, or it may rise to those above us, or flow down to those in any way beneath us. But Grace, from its nature, has only one direction it can take. GRACE ALWAYS FLOWS DOWN. Grace is love indeed, but it is love to creatures humbling itself. A king’s love to his equals, or to his own royal house, is love; but his love to his subjects is called grace.”

Mercy is NOT RECEIVING what we deserve, while grace is RECEIVING what we DO NOT deserve. A Christian who finds himself relying on himself instead of on the forgiving mercy and empowering grace of God has lost his way. Always depend on God’s grace!

2. Second, regularly and honestly examine yourself.

“Examine yourselves to see if your faith is genuine. Test yourselves. Surely you know that Jesus Christ is among you; if not, you have failed the test of genuine faith.” (2 Corinthians 13:5)

Do not excuse yourself or rationalize your sin. Julian Fellowes captured it well when he wrote, “We live in this great excuse generation, where nothing is ever your own fault and everything is always because someone was terrible to you.”

Take responsibility for who you are and what you do! Hell is not always other people! Be honest with yourself and repent of your sins. Almost all the clergy and laity with whom I’ve had a difficult time share a single fatal trait – not their sinful behavior, but their lack of humility to admit their sin and turn to God. Conceit, pride and self-delusion are dangerous. When we live like that, we only play at Christianity.

The apostle John’s warning must be taken seriously by anyone who wishes to be holy: “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we say we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.” (1 John 1:8, 10)

3. Third, pray for forgiveness, accept His forgiveness, and ask for strength to do His will by the power of the Holy Spirit.

“My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.” (1 John 2:1-2)

God has shown us amazing grace in Christ! Christ is our ONLY Savior and Mediator because he made an atoning sacrifice that was a “full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world!” He has paid the penalty for our sins. He paid our sin debt IN FULL! We do not need to finish paying any remainder of our penalty anywhere in this world or the world to come. Holiness is not atonement for sin or a way of earning God’s love and acceptance. You are already loved, accepted, forgiven, and adopted into God’s family because Jesus paid it all on the cross! We have full atonement in Christ! Jesus told us that it (our sins and debt) is FINISHED! If we do not grasp this message of God’s grace, we will fall into theological confusion, and we may, eventually, sink into spiritual despair, opening the door for Satan to undermine our confidence in the assurance of salvation, etc. Stand your ground on, by, and through the grace of God through Christ for us!

“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:9)

“It is only by God’s grace that we can remain holy in our witness, so we need to keep praying for one another to have ‘a clear conscience, desiring to act honourably in all things’ (Hebrews 13:18), that we might ‘put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness’ (Ephesians 4:24, 5:3).” – Michael Taylor

4. Fourth, if you fail morally, get back up, accept His grace of forgiveness in Christ, and move forward.

Satan loves it when you bathe in a spirit of defeat, remain downcast, and wallow in self-pity, spiritual pride, and hopelessness. As Peter reminded us, “Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.” (1 Peter 5:8-9)

Holy living is spiritual warfare with Satan, your mind and flesh, and the world. We can win this war only because Jesus is on our side as our Savior, the Captain, Author, and Finisher of our faith. As our Captain, he wants us to put on the whole armor of God, stand firm, and fight the battle: “Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the Gospel of peace. In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; and take the helmet of

salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints ..." (Ephesians 6:10-18). In this war, we must accept God's word of promise of forgiveness and hope (which Satan doesn't want us to accept). Here is that promise: "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). "My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world." (1 John 2:1-2)

5. Fifth, be vigilant, and avoid those circumstances, people, and things that lead you to sin.

"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell." (Matthew 5:27-30)

"Abstain from every appearance or form of evil." (1 Thessalonians 5:22)

Holiness requires reinforcement by frequent repetition. The late Jerry Bridges exhorted us "to never let an exception occur." He explained: "When we allow exceptions we are reinforcing old habits, or else failing to reinforce the new one. At this point we must watch the 'just this once' type of thinking, which is a subtle, dangerous trap. Because we are unwilling to pay the price of saying no to our desires, we tell ourselves we will indulge only once more and tomorrow will be different. Deep inside we know that tomorrow it will be even more difficult to say no, but we don't dwell on this fact ... We may feel that a particular habit 'isn't too bad,' but continually giving in to that habit weakens our wills against the onslaughts of temptation from other directions."

6. Sixth, we need to spend time in the Word of God privately and prayerfully; and commit to fellowship with others at public worship and outside of public worship.

These means of grace – prayer, worship, Bible study, meditation, solitude, silence, fasting, service – are gifts from God to help us walk with Him. Use them liberally!

7. Seventh, we need to intentionally plan to do what is right, trusting Jesus and the Holy Spirit to enable us.

Holiness is not just about avoiding "jeans, jazz, jokes," and other trivial matters, as Dr. J.I. Packer used to say. It is not just about abandoning sin as the Bible defines sin, it is living to honor God and love others in practical ways.

8. Finally, sometimes God uses suffering, chastisement, and secular as well as ecclesiastical discipline to help us grow in holiness.

Here is an example of the divine use of suffering to help his people grow in holiness, as the apostle Paul testified: “So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited. Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. But He said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.” (2 Corinthians 12:7-10)

- a. Sometimes the Lord must afflict us to warn and wean us from sinfulness. “Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep your word.” (Psalms 119:67). Charles Spurgeon once noted, “The Word of God is often the knife with which the great husbandman prunes the vine; and brothers and sisters if we were more willing to feel the edge of the Word, and to let it cut away even something that may be very dear to us we should not need so much the pruning by affliction and suffering.”

It is important to understand the difference between punishment and chastisement. God does not punish his children as He does sinners. Rather He chastises them for their spiritual profit. Here is Charles Spurgeon again: “God’s people can never by any possibility be punished for their sins. God has punished them already in the person of Christ. Christ, their substitute, has endured the full penalty for all their guilt, and neither the justice nor the love of God can ever exact again that which Christ has paid. Punishment can never happen to a child of God in the judicial sense, he can never be brought before God as his Judge, as charged with guilt, because that guilt was long ago transferred to the shoulders of Christ, and the punishment was exacted at the hands of his surety. But yet, while the sin cannot be punished, while the Christian cannot be condemned, he can be chastised, while he shall never be arraigned before God’s bar as a criminal, and punished for his guilt, yet he now stands in a new relationship – that of a child to his parent: and as a son he may be chastised on account of sin. Folly is bound up in the heart of all God’s children, and the rod of the Father must bring that folly out of them. It is essential to observe the distinction between punishment and chastisement. Punishment and chastisement may agree as to the nature of the suffering: the one suffering may be as great as the other, the sinner who, while here is punished for his guilt, may suffer no more in this life than the Christian who is only chastised by his parent. They do not differ as to the nature of the punishment, but they differ in the mind of the punisher and in the relationship of the person who is punished. God punishes the sinner on His own account, because He is angry with the sinner, and His justice must be avenged, His law must be honored, and His commands must have their dignity maintained. But He does not

punish the believer on His own account, it is on the Christian's account, to do him good, He afflicts him for his profit, he lays on the rod for His child's advantage; He has a good design towards the person who receives the chastisement. While in punishment the design is simply with God for God's glory, in chastisement, it is with the person chastised for his good, for his spiritual profit and benefit. Besides, punishment is laid on a man in anger. God strikes him in wrath, but when He afflicts His child, chastisement is applied in love, His strokes are, all of them, put there by the hand of love." Our heavenly Father uses chastisement to warn us, to deter us from sin, and to spur us on to holiness of life.

"And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? 'My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by Him. For the Lord disciplines the one He loves, and chastises every son whom He receives.' It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, that we may share His holiness. For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it." (Hebrews 12:5-11)

- b. Sometimes God chastens us through the ministry of Church discipline both for our holiness and for that of the Church, because God's church MUST be holy. "If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in My name, there am I among them." (Matthew 18:15-20)

"It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that is not tolerated even among pagans, for a man has his father's wife. And you are arrogant! Ought you not rather to mourn? Let him who has done this be removed from among you. For though absent in body, I am present in spirit; and as if present, I have already pronounced judgment on the one who did such a thing. When you are assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus and my spirit is present, with the power of our Lord Jesus, you are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the

flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord. Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. Let us therefore celebrate the festival, not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people – not at all meaning the sexually immoral of this world, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world. But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler – not even to eat with such a one. For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge? God judges those outside. ‘Purge the evil person from among you.’” (1 Corinthians 5:1-13)

If holiness is not important in the Christian church because “we are saved by God’s grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone plus nothing,” as the Antinomians falsely claim, why would Paul be laboring over the issue of holiness and discipline in his epistles to the churches? Holiness and discipline are essential parts of the Christian life.

This is probably why some of the Continental Reformers believed that Church Discipline should be one of the marks of the church along with the marks of “One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic.” They believed, and rightly so, that without church discipline it is almost impossible to uphold holiness in the Church. This is partly why we have disciplinary procedures to address canonical offenses in the Anglican Communion, as reflected in all Provincial and Diocesan Constitutions and Canons. To understand what constitutes a canonical (ecclesiastical) offense, we look to the ACNA (Provincial) Constitution and Canons, and to our own Diocesan Constitution and Canons.

Title IV, Canon 2 of the ACNA Canons provides:

Canon 2 – Of Charges against Bishops, Presbyters, or Deacons.

The following are the charges or accusations on which the Archbishop, a Bishop, a Presbyter, or a Deacon in this Church may be presented:

1. Apostasy from the Christian Faith;
2. Heresy, false doctrine, or schism;
3. Violation of ordination vows;
4. Conduct giving just cause for scandal or offense, including the abuse of ecclesiastical power;
5. A conviction by a court of competent jurisdiction for felony or other serious offenses;
6. Sexual immorality;
7. Acceptance of membership in a religious jurisdiction with purpose contrary to that of this Church;
8. Violation of any provision of the Constitution of this Church;

9. Disobedience, or willful contravention of the Canons of this Church or of the constitution or canons of the Diocese in which he holds office;
10. Habitual neglect of the duties of his Office;
11. Habitual neglect of public worship, and the Holy Communion, according to the order and use of this Church; and
12. Willful refusal to follow a lawful Godly Admonition.

C. Application

As I approach the conclusion of this Episcopal Address, here is the pressing question for each of us: “What should we do as individuals and as churches?”

1. We must Strive not only for holiness, but for growth in holiness.

We must strive because growth in holiness requires work – hard work. Paul wrote to the church, “Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.” (Hebrews 12:14)

There is no single step, easy, user-friendly, “holy hop” spiritual mechanism to instantaneously achieve “complete and entire sanctification.” Such types of popular “holiness training” techniques are nothing more than false advertising, spiritual laziness, and dangerous triumphalism. And that is why Paul appeals to us to strive: “Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no ‘root of bitterness springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled; that no one is sexually immoral or unholy like Esau, who sold his birthright for a single meal. For you know that afterward, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no chance to repent, though he sought it with tears.” (Hebrews 12:14-17)

Peter the apostle told us to make every effort to be holy: “For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins. Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall. For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” (2 Peter 1:5-11)

We must consciously decide to strive, to make every effort to walk in step with the Holy Spirit’s call to holiness. This is not an easy thing to do, which is why Paul states that it is a ‘sacrifice’: “I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.” (Romans 12:1-2)

2. We must strive in the power that God gives with utter dependence on Him.

We must be involved because growth in holiness is synergistic, not monergistic. This means we cannot do it alone and God cannot do it alone for us. There is no “let go and let God” in the path of holiness. We MUST work WITH Him by His power and His wisdom through His Spirit – “Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure” (Philippians 2:12-13). “Working out our own salvation” is tough. Living a holy life can be gut-wrenchingly difficult as we deny ourselves the things we want.

“Working out our salvation” will be tough. As Dr. David Platt reminds us, “In a world where everything revolves around yourself – protect yourself, promote yourself, comfort yourself, and take care of yourself – Jesus says, ‘Crucify yourself.’ Put aside all self-preservation in order to live for God’s glorification, no matter what that means for you in the culture around you.”

I encourage you to strive for holiness because God has called us to be holy. It brings joy to the heart of God. He is glorified and He blesses us in turn. The Apostle Paul reminded us that living for God is like shining like stars in a dark world: “Do all things without grumbling or disputing, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain” (Philippians 2:14-16). As difficult as it may be, let us be determined to pursue holiness because through it God gives us influence – we shine like stars in this dark world for His glory! As Blaise Pascal put it: “The serene, silent beauty of a holy life is the most powerful influence in the world, next to the might of the Spirit of God.”

What’s in it for us? Our Lord Jesus speaks authoritatively that there is blessing for those who follow Him and suffer in the process: “And Jesus said to his disciples, ‘Truly, I say to you, only with difficulty will a rich person enter the kingdom of heaven. Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.’ When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished, saying, ‘Who then can be saved?’ But Jesus looked at them and said, ‘With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.’ Then Peter said in reply, ‘See, we have left everything and followed you. What then will we have?’ Jesus said to them, ‘Truly, I say to you, in the new world, when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands, for My name’s sake, will receive a hundredfold and will inherit eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last first.’” (Matthew 19:23-30)

If we persevere in holy living, steadfast in the pursuit of holiness by the grace He freely gives us, we will in this world and in the world to come, receive much blessing.

D. Conclusion

In conclusion, let me ask you two questions:

1. Have you given your life to Jesus?

If you have not, you cannot live a holy life. There are no holy people outside of Christ. If you have not given your life to Christ, here is what to do:

- a. Repent of your sin!
 - b. Believe in Jesus Christ as your Savior! and
 - c. Commit to follow Him in obedience as your Lord!
2. If you are a professing Christian, I ask you this question: “Do you want to live a holy life?”

At some point in your life, you must make a decision as to what kind of Christian you want to be: a holy, sincere, committed, productive and effective Christian, or a nominal, hypocritical, unholy, unproductive and ineffective Christian. Every parish has to make the same decision – to be a “Sapphira and Ananias” kind of parish or a “John and Barnabas” kind of parish. The choice is yours! So, what will it be? And what is it?

If you want to be a committed, holy, and effective Christian or church, this is the time to cry out to God in repentance for mercy and power. We ALL need serious improvement in our Christian lives, so stop looking at your neighbors. The problem isn't with them, it is with the man (or the woman, or the child, or the church) in the mirror! It is time to ask God to help us by the power of his Holy Spirit to deal with the besetting sins in our lives. It is time – now! – to pray for the Lord to purify our hearts and cleanse our consciences with His Word and with the blood of Jesus!

* * * * *

Let us confess our sins in silence.

Prayer of Confession –

All: Almighty and most merciful Father, we have erred and strayed from Thy ways like lost sheep, we have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts, we have offended against Thy holy laws, we have left undone those things which we ought to have done, and we have done those things which we ought not to have done. But thou, O Lord, have mercy upon us, spare thou those who confess their faults, restore thou those who are penitent, according to Thy promises declared unto mankind in Christ Jesus our Lord; and grant, O most merciful Father, for His sake, that we may hereafter live a godly, righteous, and sober life, to the glory of Thy holy Name. *Amen.*

Absolution –

The Almighty and merciful Lord grant us absolution and remission of all our sins, true repentance, amendment of life, and the grace and consolation of his Holy Spirit. *Amen.*

Benediction –

Almighty God, you have built your Church upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone: Grant us so to be joined together in unity of spirit by their teaching, that we may be made a holy temple acceptable to you; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of His glory with great joy, to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. *Amen.*
(Jude 1:24-25)

† Go forth into the world in peace. Be of good courage. Hold fast that which is good. Render to no man evil for evil. Strengthen the fainthearted. Support the weak. Help the afflicted. Honor all men. Love and serve the Lord, rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit! And the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be upon you and remain with you forever. *Amen!*

ADDENDA –

“Biblical teaching and personal experience combine to teach that suffering is the path to holiness or maturity. There is always an indefinable something about people who have suffered. They have fragrance which others lack. They exhibit the meekness and gentleness of Christ. One of the most remarkable statements Peter made in his first letter is that ‘he who has suffered in his body is done with sin’ (4:1). Physical affliction, he seems to be saying, actually has the effect of making us stop sinning. This being so, I sometimes wonder if the real test of our hunger for holiness is our willingness to experience any degree of suffering if only thereby God will make us holy.” – Dr. John Stott

“True repentance will entirely change you; the bias of your souls will be changed, then you will delight in God, in Christ, in His Law, and in His people.” – George Whitfield

“Rivers do not drink their own water. Trees do not eat their own fruit; the sun does not shine on itself and flowers do not spread their fragrance for themselves. Living for others is a rule of nature. We are all born to help each other. No matter how difficult it is life is good when you are happy; but much better when others are happy because of you.” – Pope Francis

“Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no ‘root of bitterness’ springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled” (Hebrews 12:14- 15).

“There are two things of which a good pastor should be careful to do well: to be diligent in teaching, and to keep himself pure.” – John Calvin

“Purity – that immensely virile virtue.” – Friedrich Von Hügel

“True faith can no more be without holiness than fire without heat.” – John Owen

“Holiness is the architectural plan upon which God buildeth up His living Temple.” – C.H. Spurgeon

“The degree to which we are able to love those who oppose us tells us how much our hearts are anchored in God’s love for us. It also shows us how much more work we need to ask God to do in us.” – Dr. Ashley Null

“Deceive not yourselves therefore, thinking that you have faith in God, or that you love God, or do trust in Him, or do fear Him, when you live in sin; for then your ungodly and sinful life declareth the contrary, whatsoever you say or think ... Thy deeds and works must be an open testimonial of thy faith; otherwise thy faith, being without good works, is but the devil’s faith, the faith of the wicked, a fantasy of faith, and not a true Christian faith. Therefore, as you profess the name of Christ, good Christian people, let no such fantasy and imagination of faith at any time beguile you; be sure of your faith: try it (test it) by your living.” – Archbishop Thomas Cranmer

“There was a time when all Christians laid great emphasis on God’s call to holiness. But how different it is today! To listen to our sermons and to read the books we write, and then to

watch the zany, worldly, quarrelsome way we behave, you would never imagine that once the highway of holiness was clearly marked out for Bible-believers.” – Dr. J. I. Packer

“It is the Christians, O Emperor, who have sought and found the truth, for they acknowledge God. They do not keep for themselves the goods entrusted to them. They do not covet what belongs to others. They show love to their neighbours. They do not do to another what they would not wish to have done to themselves. They speak gently to those who oppress them, and in this way they make them their friends. It has become their passion to do good to their enemies. They live in the awareness of their smallness. Every one of them who has anything gives ungrudgingly to the one who has nothing. If they see a traveling stranger, they bring him under their roof. They rejoice over him as over a real brother, for they do not call one another brothers after the flesh, but they know they are brothers in the Spirit and in God. If they hear that one of them is imprisoned or oppressed for the sake of Christ, they take care of all his needs. If possible they set him free. If anyone among them is poor or comes into want while they themselves have nothing to spare, they fast two or three days for him. In this way they can supply any poor man with the food he needs. This, O Emperor, is the rule of life of the Christians, and this is their manner of life.” – Aristides, 137 A.D. (The Apology of Aristides to Emperor Hadrian Caesar)

“But God’s firm foundation stands, bearing this seal: ‘The Lord knows those who are his,’ and, ‘Let everyone who names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity.’ Now in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver but also of wood and clay, some for honorable use, some for dishonorable. Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from what is dishonorable, he will be a vessel for honorable use, set apart as holy, useful to the master of the house, ready for every good work. So flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.” (2 Timothy 2:19-22)

“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)

“I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.” (Romans 12:1-2)

“Jesus never concealed the fact that His religion included a demand as well as an offer. Indeed, the demand was as total as the offer was free. If He offered men His salvation, He also demanded their submission. He gave no encouragement whatever to thoughtless applicants for discipleship. He brought no pressure to bear on any inquirer. He sent irresponsible enthusiasts away empty. Luke tells of three men who either volunteered, or were invited, to follow Jesus; but no one passed the Lord’s test. The rich young ruler, too, moral, earnest and attractive, who wanted eternal life on his own terms, went away sorrowful, with his riches intact but with neither life nor Christ as his possession ... The Christian landscape is strewn with the wreckage of derelict, half-built towers – the ruins of those who began to build and were unable to finish. For thousands of people still ignore Christ’s warning and undertake to follow Him without first pausing to reflect on the cost of doing so. The result is the great scandal of Christendom today, so called “nominal Christianity.” In countries to which

Christian civilization has spread, large numbers of people have covered themselves with a decent, but thin, veneer of Christianity. They have allowed themselves to become somewhat involved, enough to be respectable but not enough to be uncomfortable. Their religion is a great, soft cushion. It protects them from the hard unpleasantness of life, while changing its place and shape to suit their convenience. No wonder the cynics speak of hypocrites in the church and dismiss religion as escapism ... The message of Jesus was very different. He never lowered His standards or modified his conditions to make His call more readily acceptable. He asked His first disciples, and He has asked every disciple since, to give Him their thoughtful and total commitment. Nothing less than this will do.” – Dr. John Stott

“Being a citizen of Christ’s kingdom is not a matter of just ‘living a kingdom life’ or ‘following Jesus’ example’ or ‘living like Jesus lived.’ The fact is, a person can be a self-professed ‘Jesus-follower’ or ‘kingdom-life liver’ and still be outside the kingdom. You can live like Jesus lived all you want, but unless you’ve come to the crucified King in repentance and faith, relying on him alone as the perfect sacrifice for your sin and your only hope for salvation, you’re neither a Christian nor a citizen of his kingdom. The way to be included in Christ’s kingdom is to come to the King, not just hailing him as a great example who shows us a better way to live, but humbly trusting him as the crucified and risen Lord who alone can release you from the sentence of death. At the end of the day, the only way into the kingdom is through the blood of the King.” – Greg Gilbert

“Repenting of sin doesn’t necessarily mean that you stop sinning – certainly not altogether, and often not in particular areas, either. Christians are still fallen sinners even after God gives us new spiritual life, and we will continue to struggle with sin until we are glorified with Jesus (see, *e.g.*, Galatians 5:17; 1 John 2:1). But even if repentance doesn’t mean an immediate end to our sinning, it does mean that we will no longer live at peace with our sin. We will declare mortal war against it and dedicate ourselves to resisting it by God’s power on every front in our lives. Many Christians struggle hard with this idea of repentance because they somehow expect that if they genuinely repent, sin will go away and temptation will stop. When that doesn’t happen, they fall into despair, questioning whether their faith in Jesus is real. It’s true that when God regenerates us, he gives us power to fight against and overcome sin (1 Corinthians 10:13). But because we will continue to struggle with sin until we are glorified, we have to remember that genuine repentance is more fundamentally a matter of the heart’s attitude toward sin than it is a mere change of behavior. Do we hate sin and war against it, or do we cherish it and defend it? One writer put this truth beautifully: The difference between an unconverted and a converted man is not that the one has sins and the other has none; but that the one takes part with his cherished sins against a dreaded God, and the other takes part with a reconciled God against his hated sins. So whose side do you take – your sin’s or your God’s? – Greg Gilbert

When a person genuinely repents and believes in Christ, the Bible says that he is given new spiritual life. “As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins,” Paul says. “But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions” (Ephesians 2:1, 4-5 NIV). When that happens, our life changes – not immediately, not quickly, not even necessarily steadily. But it does change. We begin to bear fruit. The Bible says that Christians are to be marked by the same kind of love, compassion, and goodness that characterized Jesus himself. True Christians will perform “deeds in keeping with their repentance,” Paul says (Acts 26:20). “Each tree is known by its

own fruit,” Jesus said. “For figs are not gathered from thornbushes, nor are grapes picked from a bramble bush” (Luke 6:44). In other words, when people are given new spiritual life, they begin to do the kinds of things that Jesus did. They begin to live like Jesus lived and bear good fruit. One thing we must be constantly on guard against is any thought that those fruits are the cause of our salvation. There is always a danger that when we begin to see fruit in our lives, we’ll subtly begin to rely on that fruit for our salvation, instead of on Christ. Guard against that temptation, Christian. Realize that the fruit you bear is merely that – the fruit of a tree already made good by God’s grace in Christ. To rely on your own Christian fruit to secure God’s favor is ultimately to shift your faith from Jesus to yourself. And that is no salvation at all.” – Greg Gilbert

“Where Will You Point? When you stand before God at the judgment, I wonder what you plan to do or say in order to convince him to count you righteous and admit you to all the blessings of his kingdom? What good deed or godly attitude will you pull out of your pocket to impress him? Will you pull out your church attendance? Your family life? Your spotless thought life? The fact that you haven’t done anything really heinous in your own eyes? I wonder what you’ll hold up before him while saying, ‘God, on account of this, justify me!’ ‘I’ll tell you what every Christian whose faith is in Christ alone will do, by God’s grace. They will simply and quietly point to Jesus. And this will be their plea: ‘O God, do not look for any righteousness in my own life. Look at your Son. Count me righteous not because of anything I’ve done or anything I am, but because of him. He lived the life I should have lived. He died the death that I deserve. I have renounced all other trusts, and my plea is him alone. Justify me, O God, because of Jesus.’” – Greg Gilbert

“There’s no doubt that becoming a Christian is a costly thing (Luke 14:28). But it’s also true that the rewards of being a Christian are inexpressibly awesome. Forgiveness of sins, adoption as God’s children, relationship with Jesus, the gift of the Holy Spirit, freedom from sin’s tyranny, the fellowship of the church, the final resurrection and glorification of the body, inclusion in God’s kingdom, the new heavens and new earth, eternity in God’s presence, seeing his face – all these are the promises God makes to us in Christ. No wonder Paul quoted Isaiah, saying, ‘No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him’ (1 Corinthians 2:9 NIV). The Christian life is not just about making sure you avoid God’s wrath. Far from it! It’s about being in a right relationship with God, and ultimately enjoying him forever. That is to say, it’s about gaining what we cannot lose – becoming a citizen of his eternal kingdom.” – Greg Gilbert