

Pentecost 8 – July 10, 2016  
Text: Luke 10:25-37  
Theme: Who Are You?

**“And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, ‘Speak to all the congregation of the people of Israel and say to them, You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy’” (Lev 19:1–2). These words establish the context for our Old Testament reading this morning. It’s sometimes called the “Holiness Code,” a section in the Old Testament Book of Leviticus that describes for God’s people what holiness is all about. More importantly, it describes for God’s people what they are all about. But there’s a problem. How do we become holy?**

**When a cold-blooded animal becomes too cold, it has no ability to make itself warm. A snake or a frog must find warmth from some other source—from direct sunlight or a warm rock. Without a source of warmth, it dies from hypothermia.**

**We are all cold-blooded when it comes to holiness. We cannot generate our own holiness. We have to be warmed by a holy God who makes us holy by his holiness. Holiness is not an activity. It is not something God commands us to do because it is impossible for us and God never commands us to do that which we cannot do. Holiness is not a prescription, but a description of who we already are. One of the big hurdles we have to jump is the idea that we can**

**make ourselves more holy by doing good deeds. No, we already are holy by virtue of our Baptisms. YOU are Holy because God is Holy and you belong to God. Holiness is the identity of God's people. It's what people are to see and talk about when they meet us just as it was what they were to see and talk about when they met Israel.**

**Having said that, we all recognize that we are not done growing into this amazing gift of holiness that God has given us. It is who we are, but it is not always how we act. As the baptized children of God, we are God's holy priesthood, but we are continuing to learn what it is to be people in Christ. Of course our old sinful nature fights this tooth and nail and that is why we need the Church.**

**So often I have heard people who identify as Christians say and do things that are polar opposite from what Christ teaches. When I call them out on it, they often mock me or excuse themselves or justify themselves. It is frustrating, but call you out I will, because that is my duty as a Pastor of Christ's Holy Church. The Christian life is a process of learning to keep his name holy in our lives, learning to shun sin so that we do not desecrate God's holy name that has been placed on us. Isabel, Sophia and Riley are all Baptized today, members of possibly my last confirmation class at Trinity before I retire. But having been Baptized, they are far from finished. They**

**have been made holy. That is God's gift to them, but how they will use that holiness in their lives is a life-long exploration.**

**Thankfully, God did not leave it up to us to figure out what holiness looked like. In our Old Testament reading, he was specific. Be generous to others. That is what holiness looks like. As God has generously poured out love and forgiveness on us on top of the food we eat and the air we breathe, so we give generously to his Church, his work in the community and to all in need. Leviticus says,**

**"When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap your field right up to its edge, neither shall you gather the gleanings after your harvest. And you shall not strip your vineyard bare, neither shall you gather the fallen grapes of your vineyard. You shall leave them for the poor and for the sojourner: I am the Lord your God." In other words, God says, I provide everything you have. Don't be stingy! Has anyone ever had an argument with a kid about what could be done in HIS room? Did you remind him of whose name is on the deed of that house? That's exactly what God is saying to us about our money, time and abilities.**

**Likewise we don't take what God has not given us. We don't cheat, bully or oppress people because God has freely given everything to us. In fact we show people love, sometimes even**

**tough love. We seek to serve all people to the best of our ability and knowledge. And when we fail to do any or all of that, God has given us the Church where there are people to remind us of who we are. There is God's word to teach us and strengthen us. There is the very body and blood of Christ to strengthen us for the task, forgive us our sins and empower us to be who we are.**

**Acting like the people we are is a lifetime struggle, but never for a moment let Satan tempt you to believe that you are anything less than the holy children of the Lord most high. That is who you are. You are the Good Samaritan because that is who Christ has made you. Any behavior that is not consistent with loving God, loving His Church and loving your neighbor is simply NOT consistent with who you are.**

**So as you leave this house of worship today, remember who you are. In fact, each morning when you awake, before you get out of bed, make the sign of the cross and remind yourself of who you are. You are a Baptized child of God and you make a difference in this world just by being who you are.**