Pastor Richard Allen Farmer

The Crossroads Church

5587 Redan Road

Stone Mountain, GA 30088

770-469-9069

The Hole in our Holiness, Part 1

Text: Hebrews 12:14

I am indebted to my ministry colleague, Richard Stearns, for the title of this series. Richard is the President of Emeritus of World Vision. He wrote a book titled, *The Hole in our Gospel.* In the book, Stearns challenges the Church and suggests that we have an incomplete understanding of ministry and mission. Perhaps, Stearns says, we have a hole in our understanding. We lead a person to believe that all one must do is say the sinner’s prayer or respond to an altar call or sign a new believer’s card. The gospel we preach has missing parts. Likewise, we have, sometimes, an incomplete understanding of what it means to be holy.

This short verse that I raise up for our consideration, is a two-part admonition to the Christians in the first century. The anonymous writer of this epistle urges the believers to:

1. Pursue peace with all people.

The option of selective pursuit is *not* on the table. They are to seek peace with ALL people. Our Lord pronounced a blessing on those who gave themselves to an intentional pursuit of peace.

**Matthew 5:9**

*Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God.*

**Psalm 34:14**

*Seek peace and pursue it.*

We are not to pursue peace at any cost or by any means necessary. Rather, we are to engage the culture and go up against chaos, lack of order, corruption, injustice, and demonic forces in the name of the Prince of Peace.

Rudyard Kipling wrote a poem titled, The Glory of the Garden. In it, he likens England to a garden and encourages his readers to work the garden. One stanza says, “Our England is a garden, and such gardens are not made

 By singing: “Oh, how beautiful!” and sitting in the shade

While better men than we go out and start their working lives

At grubbing weeds from gravel paths with broken dinner knives.

Beloved, peace is not made by our singing: “Oh, how beautiful!”. Peace is made by our getting on gravel paths with broken dinner knives. Peace is gained by our striving for it.

**Mark 9:50**

*Salt is good, but if the salt loses it flavor, how will you season it? Have salt in yourselves and have peace with one another.*

This pursuit of peace is complicated because it requires engagement with others. It would be more achievable if it were strictly a personal pursuit. Listen to the text:

*Pursue peace with all people.*

1 Corinthians 7:15

*...God has called us to peace.*

The pursuit of peace is practical and often political. Let us suppose we manage to successfully pursue peace, make peace, and live in peace. Even so, we will not have fulfilled the call of God upon us. The writer to the Hebrew believers writes that peace has a partner. Pursue peace with all people AND

2. Pursue holiness

A two-part admonition is given here. Follow peace and follow holiness.

Holiness is that concept of distinction. That which is holy is that which is distinct from, different from, everything else that might be in that same category.

* The Sabbath day is holy, as it is different from all other days.
* The temple is holy, as it is different from all other buildings
* You and I are holy in that we live with a different set of values and mandates than do other humans.

In this text, holiness has a qualifying clause attached to it. *Without which...*

There is an indispensability to holiness. It is not an option to be exercised by *some*.

All this month and all year long, let us recommit ourselves to be women and men of peace! AND let us recommit ourselves to holiness; to living the distinctive life, the set apart life, the peace-pursuing-live-for-God life.

**Conclusion**

The writer pushes at the edge of an unknown future in this one verse.

Seek peace. Be holy. Then.......

We will see the Lord.

In my teens and early twenties, we sang

1 As I journey through the land singing as I go,

Pointing souls to Calvary– to the crimson flow,

Many arrows pierce my soul from without, within;

But my Lord leads me on, through Him I must win.

Refrain:

Oh, I want to see Him, look upon His face,

There to sing forever of His saving grace;

On the streets of Glory let me lift my voice;

Cares all past, home at last, ever to rejoice.

2 When in service for my Lord dark may be the night,

But I'll cling more close to Him, He will give me light;

Satan's snares may vex my soul, turn my thoughts aside;

But my Lord goes ahead, leads whate'er betide.

3 When in valleys low I look toward the mountain height,

And behold my Savior there, leading in the fight,

With a tender hand outstretched toward the valley low,

Guiding me, I can see as I onward go.

4 When before me billows rise from the mighty deep,

Then my Lord directs my bark; He doth safely keep,

And He leads me gently on through this world below;

He's a real friend to me, oh, I love Him so.

I want, we want, to see God!

Sometimes I can hardly wait.

Amen.