

Holiness and Grace

PART 1: UNAUTHORIZED FIRE (LEVITICUS 10:1-11)

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Four Lakes Church of Christ
Madison, Wisconsin
April 10, 2022



It is good to be together this morning. We are glad you are here, and if you are visiting with us, we invite you to fill out a visitor card online using the QR code on the wall up here. It's also in the bulletin and on the bulletin board in the entryway, and it can also be found on our website at fourlakescoc.org/visitor. We do plan on partaking of the Lord's Supper right after we study the word of God today, so if you do not yet have the elements for the Supper, this would be a great time to get those.

As our custom has been, we are once again starting our service with a brief summary of God's plan for saving us. The gospel is the good news about the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, and we obey this good news by turning away from sin, by confessing our faith Jesus as the Son of God, and by allowing ourselves to be immersed with him, a burial in water, for the forgiveness of sins. At this point, the Christian life begins.

The first example today comes to us from Ronnie Fisher at the Simmons Street congregation down in Denton, Texas. He says, "Let's welcome our new brother into the body of Christ!! (Matthew 28:18-20)." We aren't given a name, but we do look forward to meeting this young man someday.

The next one comes to us from Jeff Whatley at the North Jefferson congregation in Mount Pleasant, Texas. He says, "All Praise be to the Lord and glory to God! Please welcome new brother in Christ Kenny Daniels. So thankful for Greenhill Villas Transport & Wellness Center at Titus Regional." I notice that we have the same lift at the pool down in Oregon. What a blessing to have help in a situation like this.

And then finally, we have another update from Mark Posey, a preacher from Alabama who returned from Ukraine a month or so ago. He says, "Praise God! Another baptism in Nikopol, Ukraine (April 3, 2022). Welcome Yuri to God's Family." As a preacher, I'm just noticing that this guy is huge, and it looks like some muscle there, which is really heavy! In over thirty years of baptizing people, I've noticed that big guys who work out are the most difficult to get back up out of the water. So, as a preacher, I just notice in the pictures here that the man helping out here basically has Yuri just squat down in the water, which is awesome. But we share these by way of encouragement, and if we can help or encourage you in your own obedience to the good news, please pull me aside after worship, and we would be more than happy to study together.

Before we get to our study of God's word this morning, we'd like to introduce a new study of Genesis, "beginning" this coming Wednesday evening at 7 o'clock. The study "begins" this Wednesday, I just need to make sure you see what I did there! We are not meeting here at the building, but the lessons premiere on our YouTube channel (you can subscribe to that channel to be notified), they are posted on our private Four Lakes Livestream Facebook page (let me know if you'd like to be added to that group), and for those without internet access, the classes are also put out on our dedicated phone line. You can call in on Wednesday at 7 p.m. (833-364-1524), and once you call, you can choose for us to automatically call you whenever we go live. You can find archived lessons on there as well. If you have not been joining us for our Wednesday study, this would be a great time to jump in, a great time for a new "beginning." Come prepared by taking about 3-1/2 hours to sit down and read through the book of Genesis. You might even be able to listen to it online or on your phone.

This morning, as we move toward a study of a rather dramatic chapter in the Old Testament, I'd like to ask whether you are familiar with the names Eleazar and Ithamar – Eleazar and Ithamar. Who are these two men? If you know who these two men are at this point, I would love to hear from you after the service today – Eleazar and Ithamar. I am guessing, though, that most of us are not familiar with these two. On the other hand, what if I tell you that their older brothers are Nadab and Abihu? At this point, I am guessing that many of us can now identify these four men as the sons of Aaron. This morning and next week (if the Lord wills), I would like for us to study not just Nadab and Abihu, but I'd like for us to study the two younger brothers as well, and the reason is: If we only focus on Nadab and Abihu, we could very easily get a rather unbalanced view of God. The account we'll be studying this morning (and next week) is found in Leviticus 10, so I'd like to invite you to be turning with me to Leviticus 10 as we study both the HOLINESS and the GRACE of God – his holiness today, and his grace next Sunday.

To give just a bit of background, the book of Exodus describes God leading his people out of slavery in Egypt. In Exodus 20, God gives the Law on Mount Sinai, and toward the end of the book he goes on to give the instructions for building the tabernacle, and the tabernacle is completed in the last chapter of Exodus, right at the beginning of their second year in the wilderness. So, they have this bright, shiny, brand-new tabernacle, but they don't have anybody to serve in it yet. Well, this brings us to Leviticus, where the Levites are given the responsibility for serving as priests. God is holy, the people are not, so the Levites are the go-betweens. They are to serve God in the temple, and they are responsible for offering those sacrifices so that the people could approach God. The book of Leviticus, then, is basically a handbook, a manual, for those who were serving as priests: This is how you do it! I would see the theme of Leviticus in Leviticus 11:45, where God says, ***"For I am the LORD who brought you up from the land of Egypt to be your God; thus you shall be holy, for I am holy."***

Well, the priests are dedicated, consecrated, set-apart, in Leviticus 9, starting with Aaron (Moses' brother) and Aaron's four sons – Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar. They have the instructions from God, and they carry out those instructions perfectly. This is important, and the reason comes in Leviticus 9:6, where Moses says, ***"This is the thing which the LORD has commanded you to do, that the glory of the LORD may appear to you."*** If they do these things, God will appear to them. God is holy, God is separate, but the grace of God has given them a way bridge the gap. And this is what happens. By the time we get to the end of Leviticus 9, we come to verses 22-24, where we find that,

22 ...Aaron lifted up his hands toward the people and blessed them, and he stepped down after making the sin offering and the burnt offering and the peace offerings. 23 Moses and Aaron went into the tent of meeting. When they came out and blessed the people, the glory of the LORD appeared to all the people. 24 Then fire came out from before the LORD and consumed

the burnt offering and the portions of fat on the altar; and when all the people saw it, they shouted and fell on their faces.

As I understand it, this is the very first worship service conducted in the brand-new tabernacle. Moses and Aron make the first offerings, fire comes down from heaven to consume those offerings, and the people shout and fall on their faces in worship. And if it had ended right here, this would have been an awesome day. However, this brings us to Leviticus 10. Let's look together at all 20 verses of Leviticus 10,

¹ Now Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took their respective firepans, and after putting fire in them, placed incense on it and offered strange fire before the LORD, which He had not commanded them. ² And fire came out from the presence of the LORD and consumed them, and they died before the LORD. ³ Then Moses said to Aaron, "It is what the LORD spoke, saying, 'By those who come near Me I will be treated as holy, and before all the people I will be honored.'" So Aaron, therefore, kept silent.

⁴ Moses called also to Mishael and Elzaphan, the sons of Aaron's uncle Uzziel, and said to them, "Come forward, carry your relatives away from the front of the sanctuary to the outside of the camp." ⁵ So they came forward and carried them still in their tunics to the outside of the camp, as Moses had said. ⁶ Then Moses said to Aaron and to his sons Eleazar and Ithamar, "Do not uncover your heads nor tear your clothes, so that you will not die and that He will not become wrathful against all the congregation. But your kinsmen, the whole house of Israel, shall bewail the burning which the LORD has brought about. ⁷ You shall not even go out from the doorway of the tent of meeting, or you will die; for the LORD'S anointing oil is upon you." So they did according to the word of Moses.

⁸ The LORD then spoke to Aaron, saying, ⁹ "Do not drink wine or strong drink, neither you nor your sons with you, when you come into the tent of meeting, so that you will not die—it is a perpetual statute throughout your generations— ¹⁰ and so as to make a distinction between the holy and the profane, and between the unclean and the clean, ¹¹ and so as to teach the sons of Israel all the statutes which the LORD has spoken to them through Moses."

¹² Then Moses spoke to Aaron, and to his surviving sons, Eleazar and Ithamar, "Take the grain offering that is left over from the LORD'S offerings by fire and eat it unleavened beside the altar, for it is most holy. ¹³ You shall eat it, moreover, in a holy place, because it is your due and your sons' due out of the LORD'S offerings by fire; for thus I have been commanded. ¹⁴ The breast of the wave offering, however, and the thigh of the offering you may eat in a clean place, you and your sons and your daughters with you; for they have been given as your due and your sons' due out of the sacrifices of the peace offerings of the sons of Israel. ¹⁵ The thigh offered by lifting up and the breast offered by waving they shall bring along with the offerings by fire of the portions of fat, to present as a wave offering before the LORD; so it shall be a thing perpetually due you and your sons with you, just as the LORD has commanded."

¹⁶ But Moses searched carefully for the goat of the sin offering, and behold, it had been burned up! So he was angry with Aaron's surviving sons Eleazar and Ithamar, saying, ¹⁷ "Why did you not eat the sin offering at the holy place? For it is most holy, and He gave it to you to bear away the guilt of the congregation, to make atonement for them before the LORD. ¹⁸ Behold, since

its blood had not been brought inside, into the sanctuary, you should certainly have eaten it in the sanctuary, just as I commanded.”¹⁹ But Aaron spoke to Moses, “Behold, this very day they presented their sin offering and their burnt offering before the LORD. When things like these happened to me, if I had eaten a sin offering today, would it have been good in the sight of the LORD?”²⁰ When Moses heard that, it seemed good in his sight.

As we learn from God’s word this morning, and as we look at the holiness of God (this week) as well as the grace of God (next week), I would like to divide this chapter into two parts, splitting our study between Aaron’s four sons. And I’m hoping that by the end of our study we will have a deeper appreciation for what it means to come before God in worship – and even when we fall short, we need to notice what is required for turning back to God.

I. And we start this morning by looking at the HOLINESS OF GOD, demonstrated for us (unfortunately) at the expense of Aaron’s two oldest sons, Nadab and Abihu.

Again, this seems to be the first worship assembly around the brand-new tabernacle, Moses and Aaron have offered sacrifices, God has just consumed those sacrifices with fire from heaven, the people fall down on their faces in worship before the Lord, and this is where we come to Leviticus 10, as Nadab and Abihu step forward. And even before we get to what they do, we need to make sure we understand that these two young men are men of tremendous spiritual privilege. They have been hand-picked by God to serve as the first priests. Back in Exodus 28:1, God said to Moses, ***“Then bring near to yourself Aaron your brother, and his sons with him, from among the sons of Israel, to minister as priest to Me—Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar, Aaron’s sons.”*** These men were with Moses on the mountain, when he received the Ten Commandments (Exodus 24:9-11). In some sense, they have seen God. These men are incredibly blessed, chosen by God.

Up to this point, then, everything is going so well. In fact, I looked up the phrase ***“just as the Lord had commanded Moses,”*** and that phrase is found at least 39 times in the opening books of the Bible, primarily in Exodus and Leviticus. They constructed the tabernacle, ***“just as the Lord had commanded Moses.”*** They made the furniture for the tabernacle, ***“just as the Lord had commanded Moses.”*** They offered their sacrifices, ***“just as the Lord had commanded Moses,”*** and so on. God is holy, we are not, so, to approach God in worship, we need to worship as he has directed. We are certainly not free to just make stuff up. So far, so good, up to this point.

And yet, making stuff up seems to be exactly what happens here. In verse 1, ***“Now Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took their respective firepans, and after putting fire in them, placed incense on it and offered strange fire before the LORD, which He had not commanded them.”*** Coming off the amazing “fire from heaven” in Chapter 9, it seems that perhaps Nadab and Abihu get caught up in the moment. They already have their fancy priest garments on, and they want in on this. It almost reminds me of Simon in Acts 8. He sees that the miraculous powers are conveyed through the laying on of the apostles’ hands, and he wants in on this. I want that power. I want people to ooh and ahhh over me, and Simon gets in trouble. He steps out of line. Perhaps that is what’s happening here. For some reason, Nadab and Abihu offer ***“strange”*** or ***“unauthorized”*** fire (as some translations have it).

As I understand this, what Nadab and Abihu decide to offer is not specifically prohibited; in other words, there wasn’t a “thou shalt not” for this (they weren’t worshipping Baal or anything), but neither had God given a “thou shalt” for what they are about to do. And that’s why we have the reference here to their fire being ***“strange”*** or

“unauthorized.” God never asked for this; or, God never asked for this at this time, or in this way. There was something about this that was outside God’s authority. And the way we look at things today, especially in the realm of religion, many people might ask, “Well, what’s the problem with that? Do you mean that we need a positive command for what we offer to God in worship? Do you mean that it might not be safe to just follow our hearts in what we offer to God in worship?” I think we need to ask Nadab and Abihu these questions.

God had given them specific instructions, “I want you to do this,” and they had in some way done something that God had not commanded – not that God had told them NOT to do it, but neither had God asked for what they were offering. I think of ordering a sandwich at WhichWich. We learned about this place when my grandfather was in the hospital down in Nashville many years ago. We found this sandwich shop, and we loved it so much that we wrote to corporate and begged them to open one in the Madison area (which they have now done in Middleton and in Sun Prairie – both are near the Costcos). But you go in and they have a wall of paper bags for each sandwich they offer. These bags have a list of ingredients with checkboxes by each one, you take a Sharpie and put an “x” by everything you want on your sandwich. You pay for the bag, they fill the bag with a sandwich made according to your specifications, and you leave. Now imagine I order a BLT and check the boxes for bacon, and lettuce, and tomato, and mayo. And imagine they go adding pickles to that sandwich. Not cool! I never asked for pickles, did I? No. Did I say, “Thou shalt not put pickles on this sandwich”? No, as well. However, I was very specific as to what I wanted on that sandwich, and to go beyond is to mess up my order. Don’t be putting pickles, or chocolate sauce, or any other abomination on my BLT. And that is a general principle we find here in Leviticus 10. God tells us how we are to approach him in worship, and he does not need to tell us every possible way that we are NOT to approach him in worship.

There are many times in life when God allows us to be wildly creative. I need to build a shelf in my garage, I can use pine or oak, I can make it three shelves or four, no problem. We plan on taking a family vacation, we have the freedom to go to Florida or Lake Superior, we can drive or fly, we can walk or bike. If you’d like to spend \$55 million on a week-long trip to the International Space Station, good for you! Or, if you’d like to do a “staycation” right here in Madison, great! If I decide to go to college, I can major in history or accounting, or I can skip college altogether and learn a trade. We have freedom. However, when it comes to worship, God has been specific. And what was true then is also true today. Has God specified how he wants us to worship today? Yes! Many of you might not know the effort that goes into planning our worship assemblies each week. I’ve mentioned it a time or two before, but sometime tonight or tomorrow, Silas Morris will send out a group email to next week’s song leader, and to me, and to our elders and to whoever will be leading the prayers for the Lord’s Supper. He’s giving us a “heads-up” to prepare for worship. I will reply all with the text for the sermon, the song leader will reply all with some song suggestions, there may be some back and forth, but by the time next Sunday comes around, we are ready to lead the congregation in worship. But with all of that preparation, there are some decisions that do NOT need to be made. We do not need to decide whether to add a piano or guitar solo to our service next Sunday. And the reason is: God has spoken, and when it comes to music in worship, he has specified that we sing. We don’t need to decide whether to install a dunk tank for the elders up here. We don’t need to decide whether to add cheese curds to the Lord’s Table. We don’t need to decide whether to add a bake sale to pay for a new roof on this building. And the reason is: God has specified what he wants in worship, and we dare not add pickles. We sing, we pray, we give, we partake of the Lord’s Supper, and we come together to learn from and to be encouraged by the word of God. God has spoken.

Years ago, I heard from a young woman who grew up in the Lord’s church here, and she was praising the church she visited somewhere, and she seemed to be especially impressed that they used a fog machine in worship. At first, I thought she was joking, “Oh, a fog machine, that’s a good one!” But no. They actually used a fog machine

to accentuate their worship experience. And the fact that she was truly impressed by this caused me to ask myself, “How have I failed as a preacher?” Where in the Bible has God asked for this? And then I thought: Nadab and Abihu probably would have approved of a fog machine. But, we are not here for entertainment, are we? If you want entertainment, go to the Overture Center (beautiful facility, great shows, great fog, wonderful entertainment). We are here today, though, to worship a holy God.

And in this case (in Leviticus), God had very specifically demanded fire from a particular source. We have the details over in Leviticus 16:12-13, where God says, **“He shall take a firepan full of coals of fire from upon the altar before the LORD and two handfuls of finely ground sweet incense, and bring it inside the veil. He shall put the incense on the fire before the LORD, that the cloud of incense may cover the mercy seat that is on the ark of the testimony, otherwise he will die.”** Pretty simple, isn’t it? But it shows us that God is specific as to the source of the fire, and when God specifies that they are to get the fire from the coals of the **“altar,”** that excludes all other sources of fire.

Today, we have many sources of fire, don’t we? Some of you know that we heat with wood at our house. I also do quite a bit of hiking. Yesterday, I ran through the house and gathered up a few sources of fire – matches in a little book, strike-anywhere matches, lighters, Swedish fire steel, the striker for lighting a torch, the Strike-a-Fire fire starters we use on the woodstove every morning, and then the torch that lights with the push of a button (this is my favorite right now). I was really careful not to get pulled over on the Beltline this morning! I’ll explain a few favorites up here: Early in the pandemic, I took my dad to International Catering over on Atlas. They serve some really good burgers out of an old school bus, and during the pandemic they kept a fire pit going. We were there when they started it one morning, and the guy used this on snow-covered wood. It was awesome, and I obviously had to make a trip to Home Depot. I’ve been using the old canister from Habitat Restore for about two years now (the canister was 50 cents). The Strike-a-Fires are basically a combination of a match and a fire starter – you strike one on the box, and it burns for about 10 minutes, just enough to get a fire going. The storm-proof matches are slightly similar and will start in rain and may even be capable of burning underwater.

Several years ago, I learned from my sister that in her work doing search and rescue in the Pacific Northwest, they are advised to keep at least three sources of fire on them at all times, in three different places. So, she might have matches in a chest pocket, a lighter in her pack, and a fire stone in her pants pocket. That way, if she’s crossing a river and her pack gets swept away, she still has a way to build a fire. Certain fire starters work better in different weather conditions as well. I got the Bic right before hiking with my sister when she came here for a visit, and I actually got carded at Hy-Vee (for trying to buy a lighter). But I share this to illustrate: If God say, “I want you to start a fire with matches,” that excludes all other sources. He doesn’t have to say, “Don’t use a lighter, don’t use a torch,” and so on. And in a sense, that’s what’s going on here in Leviticus 10. God says, “Worship in this way: Get the coals from the altar,” and all other sources of fire are excluded. It’s almost like the Olympic Flame. The source matters, doesn’t it? To open the Olympics, they don’t just flick a Bic, do they? No, where the flame comes from seems to matter for some reason. Well, in a slightly similar way, God specifies the source of the fire, but Nadab and Abihu use a source that God had not specified. They use **“strange”** or **“unauthorized”** fire.

And in response (in verse 2), **“...fire came out from the presence of the LORD and consumed them, and they died before the LORD.”** Then, in verse 3, Moses says to Aaron, **“It is what the LORD spoke, saying, ‘By those who come near Me I will be treated as holy, and before all the people I will be honored.’” So Aaron, therefore, kept silent.** What a terrifying response! God is holy! And what amazes me is God’s answer through Moses here. Moses gives the reminder, Moses gives God’s one line reply, **“By those who come near Me I will be treated as**

holy, and before all the people I will be honored.” And there is no arguing with that. Not only that, but this has not changed from the Old to the New: God is still holy! Speaking with reference to the Lord’s church, the writer of Hebrews says in Hebrews 13:28-29, ***“Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe; for our God is a consuming fire.”***

Beyond this (in verses 4-7), Aaron and his remaining sons (Eleazar and Ithamar) are told that they are not to mourn for Nadab and Abihu. We can hardly imagine being forbidden from mourning for our sons and brothers. As I understand it, though, to mourn publicly might be seen as questioning God’s judgment. These two men were killed, not in a mugging, they didn’t trip and fall off a cliff; no, they were killed by God, an act of judgment. Aaron, then, is not to mourn, and he obeys. He is silent. And I do find it interesting that this is far different from how Aaron reacted when he was called out by Moses for building the golden calf back in Exodus 32. In Exodus 32, Aaron blamed the people, and then he blamed the fire; basically, ***“They gave me their ear-rings and nose-rings, I threw them into the fire, and out popped this calf”*** (Exodus 32:24; paraphrased). Now, though, Aaron is silent. He knows that his sons have earned this punishment. He knows that God is holy.

Then, in verse 4, some cousins are called in to carry out the bodies (still in their priestly garments). They are to carry the bodies ***“outside the camp.”*** This is also where they were to take the head of the sacrificial bull, and its legs, and its intestines, and its fecal matter (according to Leviticus 4:11-12). In the same way, the bodies of Nadab and Abihu were also to be taken outside the camp. And I do find it interesting that Eleazar and Ithamar are not to carry out the bodies. I think the reason is: They still have work to do (we will get to this next week), but worship must continue, and Eleazar and Ithamar are not to defile themselves by touching their dead brothers. God says, in fact (in verse 7), ***“You shall not even go out from the doorway of the tent of meeting, or you will die; for the Lord’s anointing oil is upon you.”*** This is one of those good news/bad news situations. Bad news: Your brothers are dead because they disrespected the Lord, and you are not to mourn. Good news: You two are still alive, and now it is up to you to continue leading the people in worship. God is holy, but he is also full of grace. Again, more on this next week.

But there is something else for us to notice in this passage. And it’s easy to miss if we only study verses 1-2, if we take Nadab and Abihu out of context. I want us to notice this strange reminder in verses 9-11. Nadab and Abihu have been struck dead by the Lord, burned to a crisp as they perform an act of worship, and perhaps even as they are still carrying out the bodies, the Lord speaks to Aaron saying,

⁹ “Do not drink wine or strong drink, neither you nor your sons with you, when you come into the tent of meeting, so that you will not die—it is a perpetual statute throughout your generations— ¹⁰ and so as to make a distinction between the holy and the profane, and between the unclean and the clean, ¹¹ and so as to teach the sons of Israel all the statutes which the LORD has spoken to them through Moses.”

This is rather strange, to have a prohibition on drinking right smack in the middle of this passage about Nadab and Abihu offering unauthorized fire before the Lord. It is strange, but I do not believe this is random. The Holy Spirit put this here for a reason. I will let you decide for yourselves, but based on the placement of this warning, my opinion is: Alcohol probably had something to do with what Nadab and Abihu did here. I think most of us are familiar with the saying, “Hold my beer.” I am not making light of this at all, but just to make sure I looked it up dictionary.com and confirmed that *“Hold my beer”* is an expression joked about being said before an unthinking person does something dangerous or stupid. On the internet, *hold my beer* is used to make fun of

decisions (that are seen to be bad) made by public figures or companies.” I am not making light of this at all, but as I see it, Moses and Aaron close out Leviticus 9 with those sacrifices, God consumes those sacrifices with fire from heaven, and Nadab and Abihu have a “hold my beer” moment. Watch this! And then they proceed to offer **“strange” or “unauthorized”** fire before the Lord. They are burned to a crisp, and God then says to the survivors, **“Do not drink wine or strong drink, neither you nor your sons with you, when you come into the tent of meeting, so that you will not die.”** Why would God say that? And why would he say it right at this moment? I am just suggesting that this is not random. God says this right at this moment for a reason. There is a good chance that Nadab and Abihu might have been under the influence when they did this. When you are leading God’s people in worship, it’s like being on-duty as a cop, it’s like flying a plane, it’s like performing surgery or operating heavy machinery – you’d better be stone cold sober, you’d better blow a .00. Unfortunately, priests in times to come would continue to ignore this warning. In Isaiah 28:7-8, for example, the prophet condemns the priests and says,

***And these also reel with wine and stagger from strong drink:
The priest and the prophet reel with strong drink,
They are confused by wine, they stagger from strong drink;
They reel while having visions,
They totter when rendering judgment.
For all the tables are full of filthy vomit, without a single clean place.***

That’s not really what we want in a priest, is it? These men were leading the people in worship, while drunk. I think of the local “pastor” who had been drinking on a Sunday and killed the woman up in Sun Prairie a few years ago. Remember that? God, therefore, says, **“Do not drink wine or strong drink...when you come into the tent of meeting, so that you will not die.”**

Conclusion:

As we close, let’s ask the “So what?” question: What does this passage mean for us today? This passage reminds us that God is holy, and to approach God in worship, we absolutely must worship God on his terms, not ours. In terms of worship, we need God’s permission to do what we do. So, we don’t go into worship simply asking, “Has God condemned what I’m about to do?” That is not the right question. Instead, we really need to be asking, “What does God want from me today?” In Colossians 2:23, Paul warns about the danger of **“self-made religion.”** Does how we worship matter to God? Absolutely! In fact, we can even lead God’s worship and be rejected by God. As Jesus says in Matthew 7:21-23, **“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.’”** What we have studied this morning is what Jesus warned about (quoting from Isaiah) in Matthew 15:8-9, **“THIS PEOPLE HONORS ME WITH THEIR LIPS, BUT THEIR HEART IS FAR AWAY FROM ME. BUT IN VAIN DO THEY WORSHIP ME, TEACHING AS DOCTRINES THE PRECEPTS OF MEN.”**

Practically speaking, we see this in worship today, don’t we? So many have added instruments, or any number of things to worship, and they do this with the argument that “God never said not to.” We’ve learned this morning, though, that we are not to sin presumptuously, presuming that God will be okay with something when he has not specifically commanded it. And at the same time, we’ve also learned that what’s going on in our

hearts is also important. We can't go into worship under the influence, and we certainly shouldn't be motivated by arrogance, presuming we know what God might want, especially when he has not commanded it.

If you would like to know more, I would recommend a book we have available at no charge in the entryway this morning, *Churches in the Shape of Scripture*, by Dan Chambers, and also, *Where's the Piano?* (on the wall in the entryway and also on top of the cubbyholes back there). Dan is a friend; he preaches where one of my cousins serves as a deacon. He has a great attitude about this, and he writes in a way that is very easy to read and understand.

Lord willing, we can look at the rest of this passage next week. Today, though, we have learned that God is holy.

Before we sing a song to prepare our hearts for the Lord's Supper, let's go to God in prayer:

Our Father in Heaven,

You are the one and only holy God. Today, we ask that we would see you as you truly are, deserving of our respect and obedience. As your priests, we ask that you would serve you faithfully and carefully. Thank you for saving us from our own sin. We do not deserve this salvation that you have offered in your Son, but we are so thankful.

We come to you this morning in the name of Jesus. AMEN.

To comment on this lesson: fourlakeschurch@gmail.com