

**“OMG! We Are Holy!”**  
**Rev. Bill Freeman**  
**Sunday, February 19, 2017**  
**Menifee United Church of Christ**

Humorist Mark Twain says, “Always do right. It will gratify some people and astonish the rest.”

I love Mark Twain. My first book I ever bought by myself was “Huck Finn.” And Mark Twain is right. We should do right because then people might think we’re good people. Maybe people will think we’re Christians. Maybe people will even think we’re holy.

What does it mean to be holy? Do you have to be religious to be holy? Do you have to be pious to be holy? Do you have to be self-righteous to be holy? What does it mean to be holy? Do you have to be holier-than-thou to be holy? Do you have to read the Bible every day to be holy? Do you have to pray seven times a day to be holy?

Those would be good things, but I don’t believe you have to do all that to be holy. I believe you just have to be you to be holy. I believe you just have to be who God made you to be to be holy. I believe you just have to be, like the Army says, “Be all that you can be,” to be holy. You don’t have to be phony to be holy. You don’t have to be what someone wants you to be to be holy. You don’t have to meet somebody’s expectations of who you are to be holy. You just have to be yourself to be holy. At least that’s what I think.

The Apostle Paul says we are holy. In his letter to the Corinthians, Paul writes that God’s Spirit dwells within us and that we are God’s temple and therefore we are holy.

Wow! We are holy. Whether we’re a butcher, a baker or a candlestick maker, we are holy. Whether we’re a pauper, a poet, or a pirate, we are holy. Whether we’re a parishioner, a preacher, or a pope, we are holy. We are holy, whoever we are. We don’t have to jump through hoops to be holy. You don’t have to sign a form in triplicate to be holy. You don’t even have to bring a dish to pass at church to be holy. (Although that would be nice.) You are holy, just because you are.

Archbishop Desmond Tutu tells us that we are holy. That we are of inestimable value, and therefore, I think, we are holy.

Whoever we are, we are holy. Whatever we do, we are holy. We can’t help but be holy because we are children of God. We are holy.

The Bible tells us repeatedly that we are holy. Not just in Corinthians, but in Leviticus. Moses says that God says that we are holy because we are God’s and God is holy so we are holy.

“Now wait a minute, Pastor. Are you saying that people who believe that Muslims should be banned from our country, that they are holy? Are you saying that people who believe that we should build a wall to keep immigrants out of our country, that they are holy? Are you saying that people who think that 20 million people should be cut off from health care, that they are holy?” Well, I suppose that’s up to God. But I would say, in my reading of the Bible, yes, they are holy. I hope that they would get more loving lives and be holy. I would hope that they would be more welcoming and be holy. I would hope that they would be more caring about others and then there would be no doubt that they would be holy.

“Hidden Figures” is about three holy women, I think. Have you seen the movie “Hidden Figures”? It’s a wonderful movie, very inspirational, and it is about three African American women who work for NASA and who help man get to the moon. Now they had to overcome poverty. They had to overcome sexism. And they had to overcome racism. And they did. And I think that makes them holy. They are holy, I believe.

“Now wait a minute, Pastor. Don’t you have to be rich to be holy? Don’t you have to be a man to be holy? Don’t you have to be white to be holy?” Now I know nobody in this church would ask those questions, but, to answer them, “No, no, and no.” Whether you Have-Lots, or you Have-Not, you are holy. Whether you are a man or a woman, you are holy. Whether you are white or a person of color, you are holy. We are all holy.

Jesus tells us what it is, or how we have to act, to be holy. In the gospel of Matthew, Jesus says, “You’ve heard that it was said that you shall love your neighbor and hate your enemies. But I say to you, love your enemies.” Jesus adds that we should be perfect as God is perfect.

Wait a minute. What? In order to be holy, OK, we have to love everybody. I get that. But we have to be perfect like God is perfect? And then we’re holy? Who can do that? Maybe we just have to be as perfect as the people in the Bible are perfect and then we’re holy. Wait a minute. How can we be as perfect as the people in the Bible are perfect? Well, remember, there are very few perfect people in the Bible. Very few perfect people in the Bible. Moses killed an Egyptian. King David committed

adultery and had Uriah killed. Even the disciples. They all either betrayed, denied, or deserted Jesus. And all of those people are holy. They are as perfect as people can be in the Bible. And I think that just demonstrates that we only have to be as perfect as the people in the Bible to be holy and not everybody in the Bible was perfect. We can be holy.

Our church has gotten some unholy reviews recently online. I think people drive by our church and they see our rainbow flag, they see our Coexist sign, and they see our Black Lives Matter sign, and they decide that they're going to write a review about our church. And they do and it's not very kind. We've gotten a couple of those. They say that we're not Biblical. We're not following Biblical doctrine.

And I'm thinking: They must have a different Bible than the one I have, because my Bible says that God loves everybody, including people who are LGBT. So we are to love everybody. And we do. People who are LGBT are holy. My Bible says we are all descendants of Abraham. Christians and Jews, Buddhists and Hindus, Muslims and atheists are all descendants of Abraham and we are all children of God. Therefore, my Bible says we are all holy. My Bible says God is love and that God loves people whether they are white or black or any color. God loves them. They were created by God, made in the image of God, and therefore they are holy. The reason we have a Black Lives Matter sign up is because black lives do matter. Yes, all lives matter, but all unarmed lives aren't the ones being shot and killed by white police officers. Every instance I've heard of, it's unarmed black people that are shot and killed by white police officers. One guy was running away from a cop, unarmed, and he got shot in the back, several times, and died. Then the police officer planted a taser next to his body and said the guy stole his taser and that's why he shot him. Then the video came out. That's why we have a Black Lives Matter sign. Because it's a reminder to all of us that Black Lives Matter. So we'll keep our rainbow flag up. We'll keep our Coexist sign up. And we will put up our Black Lives Matter sign because it blew off the other day in the rain and the wind. We'll put that back up and they will stay up because I believe when we have those signs up, when we have those words up, that this church is just a little bit more holy than it would be if we didn't. A rainbow flag, a Coexist sign, and a Black Lives Matter sign. I believe that's important.

Ray Stevens had a hit song years ago that I think is holy. "Everything is Beautiful." We sang it earlier. Ray Stevens sings, "Everything is beautiful in its own way, like a starry summer night or a snow-covered winter's day. Everybody's beautiful, in their own way, under God's heaven, the world's gonna find a way."

Ray Stevens is right. Everything is beautiful. And everybody's beautiful. Not unlike the LEGO movie song, "Everything is Awesome." "But wait a minute, Pastor. Are you telling me that a platypus is beautiful? Are you telling me that the late Phyllis Diller was beautiful?" Yes! A platypus is beautiful. And the late Phyllis Diller was beautiful. Because a platypus and Phyllis Diller were created by God. Made by God. Blessed by God. And loved by God. And therefore holy.

What about you? Do you believe that you are holy? I hope so, because you are. As the Apostle Paul says, you are made by God. You have the Spirit of God dwelling within you. You are God's temple and therefore you are holy. You are holy.

So, as Mark Twain says, Always do right because then you will astonish some people. I hope that your life is astonishing to people, because you are holy.

Let us pray.  
God of Love,  
Help us to know that we are holy.  
Help us to know that we are blessed.  
And help us to know that you love us.  
Now and forevermore.  
By the power of the Holy Spirit.  
And in the name of Jesus.  
Amen.

*(This sermon was delivered without manuscript or notes,  
and was transcribed from a recording of it.)*