

- **"Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty, the whole earth is full of his glory!"** That's what OT Isaiah heard in his vision of heaven.
- **"Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!"** That's what NT John heard in his vision of heaven.
- **"Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts. The whole earth is full of your glory!"** Those are the powerful words we'll be singing in preparation for communion.
- **"Holy, holy, holy Lord God Almighty! Early in the morning our song shall rise to thee!"** Those are the beautiful words we'll be singing to close our service.

Holy, Holy, Holy! Why repeat *Holy* 3x? For intensity: it's like saying something is very, very, very big. For identification: it points to the Trinity – Father, Son and Holy Spirit (one God in three persons).

Today, as we celebrate the festival of the Trinity, our theme takes off on this repeated pattern. But pay special attention to the spellings. They'll serve as our parts: **W-H-O-L-L-Y / H-O-L-E-Y / H-O-L-Y**

(1)

Wholly! W-H-O-L-L-Y ... describes our dedication to God. God wants our complete and total devotion. He expresses that in the OT, with the First Commandment: **You shall have no other gods.** Martin Luther's explanation makes that crystal clear: **We should fear, love and trust in God above all things.**

You see that same expectation expressed in the NT with Jesus' command: **Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, with all your mind and with all your strength.** And it's emphasized in Paul's letter: **I urge you, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies (all that you are) as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God.**

God won't settle for 1 hour, or even 1 day of your week. 1 hour on Sunday morning or Thursday

evening is less than 1% of your week. One day is only 14%. What God wants is for you to live 100% of your life for him: **So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.**

"I'm supposed quit my job and sit in church all week to serve the Lord?" No, that's obviously not what he's asking. He doesn't want our devotion to be limited to worship, or serving him through our church. It's to carry over into our other roles and responsibilities. Being loving, patient and forgiving at home with our spouse, children and parents. Being a respectful and faithful employee at work with our boss and co-workers.

God's commitment to us is W-H-O-L-L-Y, 100% of the time. He wants our commitment to him to be the same. It's only fair if you recall that you are the crowning jewel of his handywork – a custom made creation. You were lost and destined to hell, but he redeemed you at the cost of the precious blood of his only Son. You even have his Word he'll preserve and protect you every day, week-in-week-out, until he calls you home.

(2)

That brings us to the second word in our trio: Holey! H-O-L-E-Y ... that's a much better description and a much truer picture of our commitment and relationship with God. Holey, as in filled with holes!

Isaiah speaks for us when he says: **Woe is me! I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips and I live among a people of unclean lips.** In the presence of God Almighty, Isaiah expressed how completely inadequate we feel. Even angels cover their face and their feet in the presence of God. Isaiah felt that way because, like us, he hadn't met God's standard of excellence. God's standard of excellence is perfection, no flaws, no mistakes, no holes.

Some of you may do inspections where you work or maybe you are in quality control. Your job is to carefully examine products. Flaws, mistakes and holes are not tolerated.

God's guidelines for us are just as precise: **Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.** No character flaws, mistakes or holes. But if you look at our actions, our words and our thoughts it's like Swiss cheese, full of holes, because we are H-O-L-E-Y!

Our sinful world certainly doesn't do us any favors. It seems to be making bigger and deeper holes every day. Pick a Commandment, any Commandment, and consider a temptation we face:

- The First – Love for God ... How am I supposed to love God and care for others, when I don't have enough time for myself?
- The Second – Love for God's name ... What difference does it make if my language is colorful at times, everyone else talks that way, even on TV?
- The Third – Love for God's Day and Word ... There's so much information and so many updates out there. It's impossible to find time to keep up on it all. Whose got time for the Bible? I've got a pretty good idea of what the Bible says anyway.
- The Fourth – Love for God's gift of his representatives ... Why should I pay attention and listen to my parents and others in authority? They make mistakes all the time.
- The Fifth – Love for God's gift of life ... I always seem to put others first and care about them. What about my needs for a change?

You get the picture. We could work our way through the remaining commandments. Our own attitudes and actions have plenty of holes in them from our sinful hearts, and this sin-infected world doesn't do us any favors.

(3)

Which brings us to our third word in our trio: Holy! H-O-L-Y ... that's what God has DECLARED us to be. How is it possible for a HOLY God – who hates sin and condemns the sinner – to regard us as HOLY? The angel, with a hot coal in his hand, answers: **See, your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for.**

How did that happen? Today's gospel is the short and sweet explanation. God bridged the Grand Canyon-like gap between his sinless self and our sinful selves. Even though he saw nothing lovable in us, he loved us anyway. And he sure loved us. God the Father gave up God the Son as our substitute when he was conceived by God the Holy Spirit in the virgin Mary.

Jesus was H-O-L-Y because we were H-O-L-E-Y. He lived for us, suffered and died for us and then came back to life for us. He closed that giant-sized gap between an imperfect world and a perfect God. He made peace between us and God.

We benefit from his rescue mission by faith. God the Father sent God the Holy Spirit to bring blessings such as saving faith in Jesus and the forgiveness of sins, blessings we would never have without his help and power. He works those blessings in our hearts through the Gospel. He does everything to bring us into God's family. He'll help us for the rest of our lives. When we are in trouble, scared or filled with guilt, the Holy Spirit helps us. He uses difficulties in our life to bring us closer to God's Word and strengthen our faith.

That's why when God looks at us he only sees what his Son and his Spirit have done to save us and secure faith in our hearts. He only sees and says: *"You're H-O-L-Y!"* And if God sees it and says it - then it must be so.

May today's trio of: W-H-O-L-L-Y ... H-O-L-E-Y ... H-O-L-Y take on a brand new meaning for you as you think about all your Triune God has done for you!