



Bethel South Sermon Notes – “*Holy Fear*”

Speaker: Ps Julie Gowans

Series: Awesome God

Scripture: Isaiah 6:1–8, Proverbs 8:13

Main Idea

The fear of the Lord is not being afraid of God—it is living with a deep reverence and awe of His holiness that transforms how we think, live, and relate to Him. Holy fear is the foundation of wisdom, godly character, and intimate friendship with God.

What Is Holy Fear?

There is a virtue above all virtues that unlocks the Christian life.

Holy fear is:

- **The root of wisdom.**
- **The foundation of godly character.**
- **The beginning of true purpose.**
- **The pathway to intimacy with God.**
- **A virtue that brings longevity and stability to life.**

If we want everything else God has for us, we must first learn to fear Him rightly.

What Holy Fear Is Not

Understanding what holy fear **isn't** helps us understand what it truly is.

1. Holy Fear Is Not Servile Terror

God is not calling us to live frightened of Him.

Holy fear is not a paralyzing dread or fear of punishment.

Instead, it draws us into a loving relationship with our heavenly Father.

2. Holy Fear Is Not Legalistic Perfection

We cannot earn God's love by performing well enough.

Holy fear isn't striving to gain God's acceptance through works.

We obey because we love and honor Him—not because we're trying to deserve His love.

3. Holy Fear Is Not Distance from God

When Adam sinned, he ran from God.

Holy fear causes us to do the opposite.

It leads us to repentance and brings us closer to God instead of farther away.

4. Holy Fear Is Not an Emotional Experience

Holy fear is more than feeling emotional during worship.

It isn't goosebumps or a powerful church service.

It is a settled posture of the heart that affects how we live every day.

5. Holy Fear Is Not a Spirit of Fear

Holy fear is not anxiety or chronic worry.

In fact, fearing God frees us from lesser fears.

When we care most about what God thinks, the opinions of people begin to lose their control over us.

What Holy Fear Is

Holy fear is a profound reverence, awe, and respect for God's holiness, sovereignty, majesty, and power.

It recognizes who God truly is.

The more clearly we see Him, the more our lives are transformed.

Isaiah's Encounter with God's Holiness

Isaiah 6 gives us one of the clearest pictures of holy fear.

Isaiah saw the Lord seated on His throne while the seraphim continually cried:

"Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty."

His immediate response wasn't confidence.

It was conviction.

"Woe is me! I am undone."

The closer we draw to God's holiness, the more aware we become of our need for His grace.

Holy fear produces humility.

Humility prepares us for transformation.

Love Draws Us In. Fear Keeps Us Close.

We often emphasize God's love—and rightly so.

But Scripture teaches that love and holy fear work together.

The love of God draws us into relationship.

The fear of God keeps us from the sin that destroys that relationship.

As John Bevere has often said, it is possible to genuinely love Jesus while failing to fear Him.

Without holy fear, compromise becomes much easier.

How Do We Grow in the Fear of the Lord?

1. Ask God for It

Holy fear is produced by the Holy Spirit.

Make it a daily prayer:

"Lord, give me the spirit of the fear of the Lord."

2. Repent of Irreverence

Ask God to reveal areas where you've become casual toward His holiness.

Choose reverence over familiarity.

3. Meditate on God's Greatness

Set aside intentional moments throughout the day simply to think about who God is.

The more we behold His greatness, the more our hearts grow in awe.

4. Memorize Scripture

God's Word continually shapes our view of Him.

The more Scripture fills our hearts, the more holy fear grows within us.

Key Verse:

"The fear of the Lord is to hate evil."

Proverbs 8:13

5. Follow the Example of Jesus

Jesus perfectly modeled a life marked by reverence toward the Father.

If we want to grow in holy fear, we look to Christ.

He delighted in honoring His Father in everything He did.

Final Challenge

Commit yourself to this journey of discovering the fear of the Lord.

Each day this week:

- **Ask God for the spirit of holy fear.**
- **Repent of any irreverence.**
- **Spend intentional time meditating on God's greatness.**
- **Memorize Proverbs 8:13.**
- **Allow the Holy Spirit to cultivate a deeper reverence for God's holiness.**

As our view of God grows bigger, our love, obedience, wisdom, and intimacy with Him will grow as well.

Discussion Questions

1. Ps Mike explained several things that holy fear is **not**. Which misunderstanding of the fear of the Lord have you struggled with the most, and why?
2. Isaiah's encounter with God's holiness caused him to become deeply aware of his own need for God's grace. What does Isaiah 6 teach us about how encountering God changes us?
3. The sermon emphasized that **God's love draws us to Him, but the fear of the Lord keeps us from evil**. Why do you think both love and holy fear are essential for a healthy relationship with God?
4. Which of the five practical steps for growing in the fear of the Lord stands out to you the most? What would it look like to intentionally practice that this week?
5. Proverbs 8:13 says, "*The fear of the Lord is to hate evil.*" How can growing in your reverence for God change the way you respond to temptation, compromise, or everyday decisions?