

**“Hooves & Holiness”**  
**Deuteronomy 14:1-21**  
**November 26, 2023**  
**Faith Presbyterian Church – Morning Service**  
*Pastor Nicoletti*

**The Reading of the Word**

We continue this morning to the book of Deuteronomy, as Moses instructs the people of Israel, while they stand on the verge of the promised land.

This morning we come to Deuteronomy 14:1-21.

Please do listen carefully, for this is God’s word for us this morning.

Moses said to the people:

<sup>14:1</sup>“You are the sons of Yahweh your God. You shall not cut yourselves or make any baldness on your foreheads for the dead. <sup>2</sup>For you are a people holy to Yahweh your God, and Yahweh has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth.

<sup>3</sup>“You shall not eat any abomination. <sup>4</sup>These are the animals you may eat: the ox, the sheep, the goat, <sup>5</sup>the deer, the gazelle, the roebuck, the wild goat, the ibex, the antelope, and the mountain sheep. <sup>6</sup>Every animal that parts the hoof and has the hoof cloven in two and chews the cud, among the animals, you may eat. <sup>7</sup>Yet of those that chew the cud or have the hoof cloven you shall not eat these: the camel, the hare, and the rock badger, because they chew the cud but do not part the hoof, are unclean for you. <sup>8</sup>And the pig, because it parts the hoof but does not chew the cud, is unclean for you. Their flesh you shall not eat, and their carcasses you shall not touch.

<sup>9</sup>“Of all that are in the waters you may eat these: whatever has fins and scales you may eat. <sup>10</sup>And whatever does not have fins and scales you shall not eat; it is unclean for you.

<sup>11</sup>“You may eat all clean birds. <sup>12</sup>But these are the ones that you shall not eat: the eagle, the bearded vulture, the black vulture, <sup>13</sup>the kite, the falcon of any kind; <sup>14</sup>every raven of any kind; <sup>15</sup>the ostrich, the nighthawk, the sea gull, the hawk of any kind; <sup>16</sup>the little owl and the short-eared owl, the barn owl <sup>17</sup>and the tawny owl, the carrion vulture and the cormorant, <sup>18</sup>the stork, the heron of any kind; the hoopoe and the bat. <sup>19</sup>And all winged insects are unclean for you; they shall not be eaten. <sup>20</sup>All clean winged things you may eat.

<sup>21</sup>“You shall not eat anything that has died naturally. You may give it to the sojourner who is within your towns, that he may eat it, or you may sell it to a foreigner. For you are a people holy to Yahweh your God.

“You shall not boil a young goat in its mother's milk.

This is the Word of the Lord. (Thanks be to God.)

“All people are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord endures forever.” [1 Peter 1:24-25]

Let’s pray ...

## **Prayer of Illumination**

Lord,  
Let your saving hand be close to us,  
for we have bound ourselves to your precepts.  
We long for your salvation, Lord,  
because your law is our delight.  
Give our souls life, that we might praise you,  
and help us now through your word.  
We have each gone astray like lost sheep.  
As we come to your word now, we ask you to seek us.  
For we have not forgotten your word to us.  
Grant this, we ask, in Jesus's name. Amen.  
[Based on Psalm 119:173-176]

## **Introduction**

We come to a passage this morning ... which is the kind of text that tends to either confuse us ... or bore us ... or give us a cruel sort of excitement at the prospect of watching a preacher squirm while trying to preach a spiritually relevant sermon about rock badgers and barn owls.

But the Apostle Paul tells us that the Old Testament was written down for us [1 Corinthians 10:11], and that all Scripture is profitable for us. [2 Timothy 3:16-17]

And Deuteronomy 14 is no different. These words are written for us, and they contain lessons for us to dig into and learn from. Some texts just require a bit more work than others.

So with that said, let's dig into the first half of Deuteronomy 14.

And to do that, we're going to need to ask four questions:

- When are we reading this?
- What's the big picture?
- Why these animals?
- And how should we apply this?

So: when, what, why, and how.

## **When Are We Reading This?**

The first thing to consider is: When are we reading this?

And the answer is that we are reading this after Christ's resurrection and ascension, and after the Day of Pentecost and the events of the Book of Acts. But this text was written before those things.

And that's important, because the New Testament tells us in several places that these food laws do not apply to us today in the same way they applied to believers before in the ministry of Christ and the Apostles.

First, the Gospel of Mark tells us that in his earthly ministry, Jesus himself effectively declared all foods to be clean [Mark 7:19]. Then, in Acts 10, the Apostle Peter received a vision in which God told him that the dietary laws of clean and unclean animals were to be done away. [Acts 10:9-16] The Jerusalem counsel later affirmed this when they did not require gentile Christians to observe any distinction between clean and unclean animals in their diet. [Acts 15] And the Apostle Paul later explained to the church in Rome that no food is to be considered unclean in itself any longer [Romans 14:14], but such things are now a matter of subjective human perceptions.

In all these ways it's made clear that these dietary laws that applied to Israel, no longer apply to Christians at this stage of redemptive history.

Now, we might wonder why something like this would change. But the truth is that a number of God's ceremonial commandments change at different points in redemptive history. God's moral law always remains the same. But there are several aspects of God's ceremonial law that change at different turning points of redemptive history. Changes in the ceremonial regulations for things like worship, sacrifice, and the priesthood each shift from the period of the patriarchs, to the time of the tabernacle, and to the time of the temple. But, of course, the most significant changes in the ceremonial law of God take place with the coming of Christ and the establishment of the Apostolic Church.

In each of these turning points of redemptive history, the details of the ceremonial laws may change. But even when we're no longer called on to follow a specific ceremonial law, there is still often something we are supposed to learn from that law.

As I mentioned earlier, the Apostle Paul tells us in First Corinthians that the Old Testament was written down for our instruction, as Christians [1 Corinthians 10:11], and he adds in Second Timothy that that all Scripture is profitable for us, for "teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness" that we "may be complete, equipped for every good work." [2 Timothy 3:16-17]

And so, even when laws like this are no longer practical requirements for us, they remain pedagogical for our spiritual lives – they contain important lessons, often in their symbolism, that we should reflect on and learn from.

The Apostle Paul explains this shift in God's methods of teaching his people over redemptive history, even as God's truth remains the same. He tells us in Galatians 3:24 that the law of God – and here for our passage we should think of the ceremonial law especially – he says that the law, as the ESV puts it, "was our guardian until Christ came." The word translated by the ESV as "guardian" is "paidagógos." And it means more than just a legal guardian. It means one who is also charged with training up, disciplining, and instructing a child. Which is why the King James Version translates it as saying that "the law was our schoolmaster." The ESV is more accurate, but the King James gets at an aspect of the Greek word we might miss. The law was to teach and train the people of God. [Leithart, 37, 210-211]

Trainers and guardians of children often employ different teaching methods in childhood than teachers do in adulthood. And in a similar way, in an earlier stage of the life of the people of God, God used some methods of instructing his people that he no longer uses in this later stage of

development. But though his teaching method has changed, he still wants us to internalize the same lessons and truths as those earlier methods sought to communicate in the past.

We can observe similar patterns in our own lives. Rigid behavior requirements in childhood are often meant to eventually give way to different embodiments of the same values which we are expected to internalize as adults.

As a child, in a group or classroom, you are required to raise your hand to speak. But the goal of that practice is not that you will continue to raise your hand in group conversations for the rest of your life. The goal is that through that practice, you internalize the concept of honoring others, not interrupting them, and speaking at appropriate times. As a child you may need to follow the rigid requirement. As an adult, you hopefully internalize the value behind that practice, and then set the rigid practice of hand-raising itself aside.

Galatians 3:24 tells us that in aspects of the ceremonial law, God has often done the same thing with his people over the course of redemptive history.

And to be clear – this is not about differences in maturity for individual believers then versus now. Moses was more spiritually mature than most of us here. Rather, it was about the maturity of the covenant community itself, across redemptive history. God is at work not just in growing individuals. He's also at work growing and maturing his people, as a community that spans generations, centuries, and millennia.

And so, reflecting on the Old Testament's ceremonial laws still has much to teach us about spiritual truths and ethics, just as reflecting on the principles that underlie raising your hand could teach a lot of people today something about how to have a conversation. But even as we can learn those lessons, we no longer need to carry out the ceremonial practices themselves.

And so, with that all said, our goal this morning is to turn to these dietary laws of Israel, and to learn what spiritual truths and moral lessons they have for us to consider and apply to our own lives.

### **What's the Big Picture Here?**

That brings us to our second question this morning: As we seek to learn from these laws, what's the big picture we see depicted here?

And it could be helpful begin by recognizing that in the Bible, animals often represent people. And that's what seems to be going on here as well.

Jacob Milgrom – whose massive commentary on Leviticus I was especially indebted to as I prepared this sermon [I've especially benefited from Milgrom, 1.718-742 in what follows.] – Jacob Milgrom points out that there is not just a two-fold division of animals in the ceremonial law of Israel, but a three-fold division, or three concentric circles – like a bull's eye. At the center you have the animals that are specially designated for sacrifice – animals that can be given to the Lord and the priests as a food offering. Then, in the next circle out, including a wider but still restricted range of animals, you have the clean animals – animals that the rest of Israel can eat. And then, beyond that, you have the rest of the animals, which the nations outside of Israel can eat (as verse

twenty-one hints at). So the three-fold division of animals is those that can be offered for sacrifice at the center, then the clean, and then the unclean.

And as food, those three circles correspond to a three-fold division of humanity that the law of Moses also puts forward. The Law of Moses separates humanity into three categories, which can be visualized again as three concentric circles. At the center, you have the Levitical priesthood. In the next circle out, you have Israel as a nation set apart for God. And then in the outer circle, you have humanity as a whole.

The three categories of animals represent three categories of humanity. The animals that can be sacrificed correspond to the priesthood, the clean animals correspond to Israel, and the unclean correspond to the non-Israelite nations.

As Milgrom argues even more extensively, the pattern fits in several ways [721-726]. And Leviticus itself makes this connection – in Leviticus 20 God says to the people: “I am Yahweh your God, who has separated you from the peoples. You shall therefore separate the clean beast from the unclean.” [20:24b-25a] God points to the parallel here between the animals and the people. He says there to Israel: I’ve separated you from the people, therefore you should separate the clean beasts from the unclean. And in the verses that follow, the Lord makes it clear that the setting apart he is referring to is a setting apart for holiness.

And to be holy means to be set apart for God’s special use.

Tim Keller summarizes this well. He points out that the Hebrew word for holiness originally means “separate, set apart.” God, in one sense, is holy because he is set apart from all other beings. People and things are holy in the Old Testament ceremonial law because “they are set apart for God’s exclusive use” and they especially belong to God. That’s what makes the utensils of the sanctuary holy. [Keller, 2:00-8:00] That’s what makes the animals designated for sacrifice holy. That’s what makes the Levitical priesthood especially holy. And in this case, that’s what makes Israel holy. God has set Israel apart as his special people. And that makes them holy. And to help them see the distinction that exists between them and the rest of humanity, he has them observe this distinction in the animal world between clean and unclean animals – a distinction between animals that is meant to be a picture of the distinction between people.

And that understanding of the symbolism here is assumed in the New Testament. In Acts 10, when God wanted to tell Peter that the Gentiles were now to be considered holy in Christ, the way he did it was by giving Peter a vision of previously unclean animals and then telling Peter that he had now made those animals clean. The message Peter took away from that was not only about food. He understood it as a symbolic message about people: it meant that God had broken down the barrier between Jew and Gentile. [Milgrom sees the same thing: Milgrom, 726]

And with that, we can understand better why this food law changed in the New Testament. Because when it comes to the division of people in the world, while a division still remains between believers and unbelievers, on this end of Pentecost the details have changed in significant ways.

The world remains divided between those following Yahweh, and those set against him – this is the concept of antithesis that we focused on last Sunday. Humanity still remains divided in that fundamental way.

But the markers of that division have changed. The division is no longer focused on Israel as an ethnic people. The gospel, we are told, has torn down the wall of hostility between Jew and Gentile, and formed one new people in Christ. [Ephesians 2:14] And because those details of the division running through humanity have changed, the markers and the symbolic system which express that division also needed to change. And so the food laws which separated Jew and Gentile were done away with, just as the spiritual distinction between Jew and Gentile was done away with.

And yet we are still called on to consider the core spiritual message: That there is a fundamental division between believers and unbelievers – between those who are in Christ and those who are in Adam, between the line of the woman and the line of the serpent. But that division is no longer ethnic and no longer expressed through things like food.

And so, for us today, we are no longer called on to observe the food laws of Deuteronomy 14 and Leviticus 11 in practice, though we are called on to reflect on the lesson they teach us.

And the first lesson – the most obvious one – is that there is a key distinction between those who are followers of Yahweh, the God of the Bible, and those who are not – which today means those who are in Christ and those who are not.

Like the animals set apart for Israel, those who are in Christ have been reckoned before God as clean, and those who are not in Christ have been identified as unclean.

But as we think about this in terms of the animals here, it leads us to another question: Why these animals? Why are these specific animals designated as clean while others have not been?

### **Why These Animals?**

And that becomes our fourth question: Why these animals? Why are these specific animals considered clean?

First, we need to note that even in ancient Israel, these distinctions were not biological, aesthetic, or moral. The distinction was strictly culinary in its symbolism – it was about what Israel could eat.

The eagle is a beautiful, powerful creature, and we're told that one of the faces of the cherubim in heaven is the face of an eagle. The lion is also a noble animal in the Bible, and Christ himself is described as the lion of Judah. But as food, both the eagle and the lion were unclean according to Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14. The distinction in focus was only about what people eat – not about the value of the animals in any other way. [Jordan, 101]

That said, when it comes to the reason some animals are clean as food and others unclean ... many different theories have been suggested [Milgrom, 718] – so many, that some people give up on trying to understand. And while the diversity of thought should cause us to be humble in our own reflections, I still think we can gain something by wrestling with the symbolism before us here.

To start, with Milgrom's help, we can begin by discarding several theories off the bat.

One theory suggests that the animals marked as unclean were those sacrificed by Canaanites to their pagan gods. But this doesn't hold up as a rationale because the animals Israel was told to sacrifice to Yahweh were also sacrificed in Canaanite worship. [Milgrom, 718]

Others have suggested that the unclean animals are linked with death, in significant part because they live in regions hostile to life. But domesticated herbivores like the camel and donkey are also marked as unclean, which contradicts that theory. [Milgrom, 718]

Still others have put forward what's sometimes called the "hygienic hypothesis": that the animals forbidden were especially carriers of disease. But in that case, it's odd that the camel was designated as unclean, as it was a culinary delicacy in the Middle East, seemingly without remarkable health risks. It's also odd that if health is the main concern, nothing is said of poisonous plants. On the whole, the hygienic hypothesis doesn't seem to hold up either.

That leaves us with two major theories remaining: the symbolic theory, that these animal traits represent certain human actions, and the traditionalist view that the traits chosen by God are arbitrary.

And I think an interpretation worth reflecting on comes from a combination of these two views.

First, I think there is some biblical symbolism that we can rightly suggest here.

What seems to mark clean animals is how they walk and how they eat.

Consider first how they walk. In Genesis 3:17 the ground is cursed because of human sin. And while the ground was not itself ceremonially unclean, it's noteworthy that clean animals are identifiable as those that have been distanced from the cursed ground by hooves – giving them a level of separation from where the curse fell. [Jordan, 100-102]

This idea seems to be further reinforced when we think of the serpent. The serpent lies in the dust of the ground, while the clean animals not only walk above it, but even their feet are separated from it. In their relation to the ground then, the clean land animals, we might say, are those that are least serpent-like. [Leithart, *Theopolis*, 49:00f]

As we turn to sea creatures, we see that the clean sea creatures have fins to keep them off the ground, as well as scales which provide an additional layer between them and their environment.

The birds listed as unclean tend to be carrion birds or predators, and so their feet often land upon dead animals – causing them to walk upon death.

And so, symbolically, one thing that seems to set apart the clean animals from the unclean is that they move through the world with a level of separation between themselves and the curse of sin, which is symbolized by the ground or the dead. That trait also makes them most unlike the serpent. [Jordan, 100-102; *Theopolis*, 49:00ff]

The other element that makes clean animals identifiable is how they eat. Specifically, with land animals, they "chew the cud." For one thing, again, we should note that this is the least serpent-like way to eat. Serpents swallow their food whole. Clean animals, by contrast, chew it for extended periods. So this is a call, again, towards un-serpent-like traits. [Roberts, *Theopolis*,

52:00f] Along with that, from ancient times, chewing the cud was seen as a symbol of meditation [Milgrom, 719]. And so, the image of chewing the cud can appear to be an image of meditating on the Word of God – reflecting on it in order to apply it to our hearts and lives, as Deuteronomy has been encouraging us to. [Jordan, 100-102; Leithart, *Theopolis*, 50:00f]

To me, there is something to these explanations, seeing in these animal traits pictures of a separation from the curse of sin and ruminating on the Word of God. I'll say more about that in a moment.

But first, we need to acknowledge ... that while I do think there is something to symbolic explanation ... there are also real holes in it.

As Jacob Milgrom points out, we may see symbolism in having hooves. But that symbolism doesn't usually explain why God required a "split" hoof as we read in verse six. [Milgrom, 720] If the only point is separation from the ground, then why does the hoof have to be split?

We could add that while the identifiable marks of the fish fit with separation from the environment, there's an odd lack of marks when it comes to how the fish eat. And while I think there's something to the issue of where birds stand, that element does seem a bit weak, or at least incomplete.

Moreover, as Jacob Milgrom points out, there's always a level of arbitrariness with such symbolic pictures. [Milgrom, 719].

And even if we're right that the Lord intends the symbolism we've outlined, we can still ask: Why these symbols in the animal world and not other symbols? God could have chosen different animals by employing different symbols for the same concepts, couldn't he? And so, even as we reflect on the meaning of the identifiable markers, we're still left with an element of the traditionalist interpretation that these distinctions ultimately seem arbitrary.

So where does that leave us?

Well, I might put it like this: What we learn as we reflect on this list of animals and their designations, is that those God has especially set apart and made clean should be identifiable, but the reason he's chosen them specifically remains a mystery to us.

Let me say that again: Those God has especially set apart and made clean should be identifiable, but the reason he has chosen them specifically remains a mystery to us.

And I think that might be what we most need to take away here. Because that's true not just of the animals described in Deuteronomy 14 and Leviticus 11. It's also true of the people they symbolically represent.

Those people that God has especially set apart and made clean should be identifiable ... but the reason he has chosen them specifically remains a mystery to us.

That then brings us to our fourth question.

## **How Should We Apply This?**

How should we apply this?

And I think there are at least two ways.

First, like these clean animals, we too, as God's people, should be identifiable in certain specific ways.

And second, just as the reason God chose these animals in particular remains a mystery, so we must remind ourselves daily that the reason God chose us individually remains a mystery.

Let's think about those points.

### **Being Identifiable**

First, we said that those animals that God set apart and made clean were identifiable because of certain specific traits, and the same should be true of us.

And the traits that should set us apart are, I think, the traits symbolized in these animals.

We should aim, as God's people, to be identifiable both by what we take into ourselves, and what we distance ourselves from.

First, we should be marked as people who take in, and meditate on – who ruminate on – the Word of God.

We are called on to take in God's word – reading it and listening to it – which is essential for our spiritual life just as food is for physical life.

But then, we're called not just to gulp down the Word of God and move on. We're called to meditate on it. To, in a sense, chew it over, and contemplate it.

This doesn't have to be a big and fancy act. It doesn't have to be technical or mystical. It's simply a matter of wrestling with God's word – of thinking intentionally about what it means, and how it applies to us.

We might do this with a broad story line of Scripture, or a single bible story ... with a paragraph ... or with a single verse or phrase.

Whatever the size of the text, meditating on God's Word – chewing it over –helps us to more thoroughly digest it – to get more from it, and to absorb it more thoroughly.

Where should you be taking more time – even if it's just a few minutes – to intentionally wrestle with and chew on God's word ... to prayerfully reflect on both its meaning and its application to your life? That's something that should help set you apart as holy to the Lord: that you take in, and meditate on God's Word.

Second, we should be people who distance themselves from sin. We're not to be comfortable or at home in the curse of sin. Rather, we're to be identifiable as the least-serpent-like of people – the most unlike Satan. Instead of eating up sin as a serpent appears to eat up the dust of the ground [Genesis 3:17], we're to put distance between ourselves and sin. Now ... as in the symbolism of the clean animals, that doesn't mean we leave the sinful world. But rather, it has to do with how we navigate within the sinful world.

It means, first and foremost, that we resist embracing sin ourselves, and we take the battle of refusing sin seriously in our own lives – in what we do, what we say, and what we think. In all three realms we seek to put a wall between ourselves and sin. That's our calling.

Second, we should put a wall between ourselves and temptation when possible. We should, as Paul calls us to, flee from temptation [1 Corinthians 6:18 with Genesis 39:12]. We should recognize the susceptibility of our hearts to temptation, and so rather than arrogantly exposing ourselves to temptation, we should humbly avoid such things.

Third, even when it's not we who are committing it, we should never feel at home in close proximity to sin. We should love sinners – it's true. But we should always feel distress over their sin, even as we seek to show them Christ-like love in the midst of it. We should make sure that we do not cherish an affection for the sin of others, even as we do seek to have affection for them.

Taken together, we see that as God's set apart, holy, people, we should strive to be identifiable as those who meditate on God's Word and distance themselves from sinning.

### *Living in Light of the Mystery*

But then second, we also need to remember that even as we may see certain symbolic pictures in these traits ... the reason God chose these animals specifically to symbolize these virtues and to represent his people remains, ultimately, a mystery to us.

And that's fitting. Because if we know ourselves, and we're honest before the Lord, and we read the Scriptures, then we also know that as Christians, the reason God chose us specifically to be his special, holy, set apart people, is also a profound mystery to us.

If you're a Christian, then you're a Christian only because God sought you, and gave you faith, and made you his own. He has not done that with everyone. And why he chose you is a complete mystery.

The Bible is clear that it's not because you were better, or smarter, or somehow more worthy. It was not because of any merit in you. But God, out of love, chose you, and made you clean, and separated you for himself. The reason he chose you is a mystery. And the only proper response to that mystery is thanks, and praise, and gratitude at the incredible grace you have been shown by God.

If you became a believer at some point, then there's a story to how you came to the Lord. But that story was not your own doing. Had not the Lord effectually called you by the Holy Spirit – had he not worked a miracle in your heart – then you never would have believed. The Lord gave you new

life, and you came to embrace him by faith. It was pure gift, and why that gift came to you is a mystery. The only right response is gratitude and thanksgiving to the Lord.

And if you grew up in a Christian home, the mystery is remains profound. For one thing not all who grow up in Christian homes remain Christians, and for those who do it is a gift of sheer grace. But beyond that even, it is of grace that your parents, or their parents, or however far the line goes back – it is only by grace that your family line came to know the Lord in the first place. Many other families have not. Yours was chosen out of pure grace – not because your family is better than anyone else's. And so, the proper response to the mystery of your status as a covenant child and continuing believer is gratitude and thanksgiving to the Lord.

And if you're here this morning ... and you're not a Christian ... but you feel a longing to know the Lord ... you can't seem to shake these questions about him, or this sense that he is pursuing you ... then that too may be a sign that the Lord has chosen you. It may be a sign that he is giving you faith and life, so that you can embrace Christ and be cleansed of your sin, and assured of an eternity with him. Every true spiritual insight you have, every spiritual question that keeps bugging you, every word of truth that comes to you is a gift of grace. Why those things are coming to you when they don't seem to affect so many others is a mystery of God's grace, and the proper response is to embrace Christ, and to give him thanks and praise.

For all of us, the mystery of God's calling us, when he has not called others, should lead to profound humility. And if anything, we should see that compared with others in the world, we are often much less impressive. And our text reinforces this. The wild goat, whom the Lord made clean, was not very impressive when compared with the lion, who was unclean ... and the same could be said of the chicken who was clean when compared to the eagle who was unclean. Perhaps there is a point in that. It's not the most powerful or noble animals that are used in this aspect of the law to symbolize God's people. We are mere chickens and goats. And shockingly, incomprehensibly, mysteriously, God has chosen to make us clean and call us his own.

And so as Christians – as those made clean by God's grace – we should not be impressed by ourselves. But we should be humbled and filled with thanks towards our gracious God, who has made us clean.

## **Conclusion**

Humility at the mystery that the Lord has chosen to make us clean, of all people, and a commitment to honor that gift by being identifiably distinct as his people.

Those are, in many ways, the take-aways from this unusual text.

So be humbled by the mystery that God chose to make you his own.

Be thankful that the Lord, by his grace, has made you clean.

Be different from the world around you, by meditating on his Word.

Be distinct from a fallen world by fleeing from sin.

Brothers and sisters, in these ways, let us be set apart as holy to the Lord.

Amen.

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**This sermon draws on material from:**

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Note: In my preaching I often cite and draw from a range of sources, which includes material from Christians within my theological tradition, Christians outside my theological tradition (in keeping with our church’s core value of “Reformed Catholicity”), and also (following the Apostle Paul’s example in Acts 17) non-Christians who are well outside of Christian orthodoxy and orthopraxy. And so, when I cite an author or a source, that citation should not be understood or construed as me necessarily agreeing with, endorsing, or recommending to others anything else from that author or source, except for what I explicitly say I agree with, endorse, or recommend. When engaging with different materials and thinkers, all Christians must exercise wisdom and discernment to determine what is helpful, appropriate, and edifying for each person, taking into account their current needs, wisdom, and spiritual maturity.