

Sermon for FBC Nov. 19th, 2017

God's Presence

Good morning!

Today the message is titled "God's Presence."

I want to start with this humorous dialogue from Rick Ezell, in his sermon entitled "Hello, My Name is Jesus, I made it!"

Did you hear about the group of scientists who got together and decided that man had come along way and no longer needed God? They picked one of their colleagues to tell God that they were done with Him. The learned scientist spoke to God saying, "God, we're to the point that we can clone people and do many miraculous things. So we've decided that we have no need for you."

God listened patiently and then said, "Very well, how about this, let's have a man making contest."

To which the scientist replied, "OK, great!"

But God added, "Now, we're going to do this just like I did back in the good old days with Adam."

The scientist said, "Sure, no problem" and bent down and picked up a handful of dirt.

God stopped him and said, "No, no, no. You get your own dirt!"¹

This is funny but has truth to it. God created us to be with Him, to be in His presence forever. He desires us to have a continuous contact with Him, our creator. God tried hard to keep mankind in His presence, but His people wandered away so many times. Over and over again, God reached out to our ancestors, and now us, to try for the closeness He wanted with all of us.

When Val and I were at the Banff Pastor's Retreat, we heard from guest speaker David Fitch, author of "Faithful Presence". This message today is based on the first session with David.

God's Presence – All through the Bible is the thread of God's presence with people.

Genesis 3:8-9 NIV Garden of Eden (Adam & Eve hide as God is walking in garden)

8 Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden.

9 But the Lord God called to the man, "Where are you?"

Genesis 3:13-14 NIV Cain's banishment

13 Cain said to the Lord, "My punishment is more than I can bear.

14 Today you are driving me from the land, and I will be hidden from your presence; I will be a restless wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me."

To be "hidden from your presence" implies that Cain was in the presence of God. He understood what it meant to lose that relationship with God

Gen.17:3-8 NIV Abraham – God’s Covenant

3 Abram fell facedown, and God said to him,

4 “As for me, this is my covenant with you: You will be the father of many nations.

5 No longer will you be called Abram; your name will be Abraham, for I have made you a father of many nations.

6 I will make you very fruitful; I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you.

7 I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you.

8 The whole land of Canaan, where you now reside as a foreigner, I will give as an everlasting possession to you and your descendants after you; and I will be their God.”

Exod. 3:4-6 NIV Moses – Burning bush

4 When the Lord saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush, “Moses! Moses!”

And Moses said, “Here I am.”

5 “Do not come any closer,” God said. “Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.”

6 Then he said, “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.” At this, Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look at God.

Psalm 46:10-11 NIV

10 He says, “Be still, and know that I am God;

I will be exalted among the nations,

I will be exalted in the earth.”

11 The Lord Almighty is with us;
the God of Jacob is our fortress.

Matthew Henry puts emphasis on this passage: “They have the presence of a God of power, of all power.”²

Acts 2:25-28 NIV Paul is quoting David from Psalm 16: 8-11

25 David said about him:

“I saw the Lord always before me.

Because he is at my right hand,

I will not be shaken.

26 Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices;
my body also will rest in hope,

27 because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead,
you will not let your holy one see decay.

28 You have made known to me the paths of life;
you will fill me with joy in your presence.’

Robert Girard, in his “The Book of Acts”, quotes William Barclay: “We must never think that anything Jesus did changed the attitude of God to men. It was by God Jesus was sent. We may put it this way – the cross was a window in time allowing us to see the suffering love which is eternally in the heart of God.”

Girard goes on with his take on this passage: “Genuine Christianity is packaged in the person of its founder and present leader – who died on the cross, rose from the dead, holds the most highly exalted position in the universe, and by his Spirit literally lives in His followers!”³

Ephesians 1:13-14 NIV

13 And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, **14** who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession—to the praise of his glory.

A study of Ephesians One in the Living Today Magazine gives us clarity to some key words:

“You also” (vs.13) refers to the Gentiles – any people who are not Jews – most of us fit that category.

“Sealed” All Christians are sealed with the Holy Spirit. Every Christian has the Spirit, and having the Spirit is God’s guarantee that the believer will one day come into all the blessings that are his in the heavenlies.

“Our” (vs.14) refers to those in the Christian Church – which links the two groups together.⁴

It’s interesting that the November 16 Daily Bread devotion is titled “In His Presence” and uses ***Psalm 89:15 NIV*** as its key verse.

“Blessed are those who have learned to acclaim you, who walk in the light of your presence, Lord.”

Harold Myra, guest writer, gives us the morning prayer of Brother Lawrence, a seventeenth-century monk: “O my God...grant me your grace to stay in your presence.”

Then he recounts how the monk spent the day walking with God in all that he did that day.

Harold ends the devotional with this thought: “Whether it’s standing in store or airport lines, or waiting on hold minute after minute, our lives are full of moments like these, times when we could get annoyed. Or these can be times when we catch our breath and see each of these pauses as an opportunity to learn to ‘walk in the light of God’s presence.’”⁵

Presence of Christ – we need to ask Jesus to be with us. Keeping our minds on Jesus as we go through the day is easier when we understand the importance of being in His presence. Also, we need to remember what being in the presence of God is – the most holy, awesome God who loves you forever.

¹Rick Esell, pg. 1

²Matthew Henry, pg. 213

³Robert Girard, pg. 30

⁴Living Today magazine, pg. 30

⁵Harold Myra

Bibliography:

And New International Version (NIV)

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