

God's Indwelling Presence

March 30th, 2014

When Joyce and I lived in Tajikistan back in the 90s, there were always **those moments when we'd be really homesick** for our families back home.

- And, unfortunately, for the first few years that we lived there, there was just **no reliable way to communicate** with them.
- In fact, if we wanted to talk with them, **we'd have to go to the Post Office** where we'd pay upfront for ten minutes and then wait an hour for the call to be connected.
- If they managed to make the connection, we'd always never make it the full ten minutes without getting disconnected.
- And so, we'd often get off the phone more homesick than when we got on!

At the time, I was leading a Business Development Center in the capital city of Dushanbe.

- And it became clear that, if Tajikistan was going to connect to the world, they're going to need email.
- So, Joyce and I flew to Russia to get everything we needed to set up the first email node in Tajikistan.
- In fact, that was the only email in Tajikistan for at least three or four years.
- But, ultimately, as important as it was for the country, we were mostly driven by the desire to stay connected with our families.

But, we still wanted to hear their voices. And so, by our fourth year, our team got a satellite phone.

- This thing was **literally the size of a large briefcase**... and cost nearly \$5 per minute to use.
- In fact, to use it, we had to go out onto the roof... use a compass to determine the location of the satellite...
- And then we'd have to point the top of the case, which was the antenna, toward that satellite for it to work.

Setting it up was one thing... but using it was no easy thing either since there was a 3 second delay between what I said and what they heard.

- My dad never got the hang of it... and so **we would always be talking over each other.**
- I'd just be sitting on that roof cracking up... missing them all the more!

In spite of its flaws, **that monstrous satellite phone** was the closest thing we had to “being present” with our family.

- But, of course, it just wasn't the same as being there.
- You see, when it comes to someone you love, **presence is one of the great gifts** of life.

In fact, what is there that can really take the place of presence? **Telephone calls? Texts? Gifts? Pictures** or mementos?

- Just ask the person **who's lost someone they love** what they miss the most... and **the answer will likely be... “Presence.”**
- Truth is, because we were created to live in community with one another and with God, **we were, in fact, created to be a people of Presence.**

When you read about the Garden in **Genesis 2**, for example, you see **not only** a God who loves dwelling with His children...

- But **two children** who, up until the Fall, just loved being *with Him...* in His presence... each and every day.
- That's how Scripture begins... with humanity **living amidst God's abiding Presence.**
- And, that's how Scripture ends... with humanity **living amidst God's abiding Presence.**

Revelation 21:3 *“And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God.”*

- And, everything in between Genesis and Revelation, is God's relentless pursuit to restore humanity back into the intimacy of the Garden.

In **Leviticus 26:11-12**, for example, God makes this promise to Israel. He says, *“I will make My dwelling among you... I will also walk among you and be your God, and you shall be My people.”*

- In **Isaiah 43:2**, He says *“When you pass through the waters, I will be with you.”*
- He says, in **Jeremiah 1:8**, *“Do not be afraid... for I am with you and will rescue you,” declares the LORD.*

After His sin with Bathsheba was exposed in **2 Samuel 11:15**, David cried out to God in **Psalms 51:11**...

- *“**Create in me a pure heart, O God,** and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me.”*
- Just the idea of being outside of God’s presence was too much for David.

But as much as **Psalms 51** reveals David’s cry for mercy, **Psalms 32** shows his heart of thankfulness **for the Lord’s “unfailing love.”**

- A God who, in **verse 7**, promised to be his **“hiding place,”** that abiding presence in his life.
- That **whole scene took me back** to another passage of Scripture... in **Exodus 33**.

Moses has just led the Israelites out of their captivity in Egypt... and so, for the first time in their lives, they’re free!

- And **not only** do they get to witness **God’s incredible power** in setting them free from Egyptian captivity...
- **not only** did they get to witness God’s amazing power in the parting of the Red Sea...
- but now, **God tells them** that **He’s gonna lead them to the land** He had promised to Abraham.

And yet, it wouldn’t take Moses very long to discover that this journey... **between where they were** and that land flowing with milk and honey... **would not be easy.**

- You see, in **Exodus 33**, **Moses has just come down** from Mt. Sinai for the first time after receiving the law.

- The problem was that **once he got far enough down the mountain**, he found his people worshipping a golden calf they had forged with the gold they had taken with them from Egypt.

Moses was so angry that **he threw the two tablets of stone**, on which God had written 10 commandments, down to the ground.

- He then cries out to God in **verse 12**, ***“God, you’ve called me to lead your people to this wonderful place... but how in the world will we ever get there? How is this ever going to happen?”***
- It must have been overwhelming for Moses. How could he do what God’s called him to do? How is he going to lead Israel?
- In fact, Moses basically tells God, ***“Nope, I’m not doing it!”***

So, God speaks to Moses, in **verse 14**, and offers Moses this promise. He said, **“My presence will go with you.”**

- That’s just what Moses needed to hear!
- So, Moses says to God, ***“If your Presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here.”***
- *“That land flowing with milk and honey means nothing to me, if it means not having You, God. So, if You’re not going with us, keep us in this desert... at least I know you are here!”*

You see, deep in his heart, Moses got it. He understood that **God’s presence is our daily bread. It’s what gives us life.**

- That’s why David said, *“It’s in Your Presence, Lord, that there is fullness of joy.”*
- He knew that God’s presence, *through the Spirit*, is what gives us life.

Even as I prayed for this service this morning... I know that ultimately, **it’s not about my sermon... or the worship** the musicians lead us in...

- Instead, it’s all about Him. ***“Lord, it’s Your presence we want this morning... nothing else.”***
- I say all that because I want you to understand that **as much as we’re called to make a difference** in the world around us...
- As much as we’re **called to join with God in seeing lives transformed** by God’s love and power

- Our **ultimate calling as His church is His Presence.**

And yet, as much as I want to live and rest in His presence in my everyday life, life has a way of distracting me at times.

- Sometimes the masses of little insignificant things start to cast a shadow over the One Thing that's most important to me.
- It is intentional. For me it tends to happen when allow myself to get too busy...
- when I ignore the speedometer telling me that I'm in the red.
- You see, busyness is never a context for intimacy; And **when intimacy is gone**, the passion for His presence will fade with it.

And when that happens; If, even for a moment we were to hit the pause button of our life and pay attention to it,

- We might notice that our souls are crying out for more of His presence... because **we were created for Presence.**
- There's **nothing more important...** nothing more **life-giving** than to live life in His Presence.

If you're anything like me, **you've probably thought to yourself** how amazing it would be if Jesus could be as near to you as He was to the disciples.

- But think about **the passage Clint shared last week** in his communion message, where Jesus told His disciples, in **John 14:16...**

- ***“But, in fact, it is best for you that I go away, because if I don't the Advocate won't come. If I do go away, then I will send Him to you.”***

Now, that word, *Advocate*, comes from the Greek word, *Paraclete*.

- It's a word that **doesn't have an exact parallel** in English, which is why different version of the Bible translate it differently.
- While the NIV translates Paraclete as the **“Advocate,”** another version translates it as the **“Counselor,”** who always listens intently as you share your heart.
- The KJV translates Paraclete as **“Comforter”** like a warm snuggly blanket.

- The NASB says “the **Helper**” while the **Message** speaks of “**The Friend**” who will with us forever.

You see, the One who will be with us forever will be like the best of **Counselors**; the best of **helpers**; the best of **friends**.

- And yet, the **best way to describe the Paraclete** is One who comes alongside of us.
- In other words, the One who comes alongside of us in our lives is **the One who will be with us**, in our presence, forever.

In **John 14:16**, Jesus says, “*I will ask the Father, and He will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever—the Spirit of truth.*”

- Now, when Jesus told His disciples that it’s better for us that He goes so He could send “ANOTHER” One,
- **The word Jesus used for “another” was “allos,”** which means “another of the same kind.”
- In other words, the One Jesus was going to send was just like Himself.
- He’s **not going to send some 3rd string substitute** quarterback. He’s **going to send Someone exactly like Himself** to be WITH us.

But then, in **verse 17**, Jesus talks more about the Spirit. He says, “*The world cannot accept Him, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him. But you know Him, for He lives with you and will be in you.*”

- **Verse 18**, “*I will not leave you as orphans (I will not leave you alone); I will come to you.*”
- **“And on that day,” Jesus says in verse 20, “you will realize that I am in my Father and you are in me, and I am in you.”**

I love this because we see the **wonderful mystery of the Triune God!**

Jesus asks the Father to send Another One to stand alongside of us... to be with us.

- In fact, He says, in **verse 16**, that the Spirit... **the One who’s just like Him**, will live within us.
- And yet, Jesus is also saying, in **verse 20**, that He is in us as well.

- In other words, **you never have to say, “Wouldn’t it be great to have Jesus near me?”**
- You have Jesus near you through the Holy Spirit! Now, that’s Good News!!

And, it’s the Holy Spirit that’s inviting you, this morning, to step back into the intimacy of His presence.

- I mean, without that... **without His presence with us**, what really do we have?
- Even Moses says in **Exodus 33:16**, **“Unless Your presence goes with us... what will distinguish us from all the other people on the face of the earth?”**

Without God’s presence, **what makes us different** than any other institution?

- Without God’s presence, **what is there to set us apart from other religions?**
- What will make us different from the **“be a good person”** philosophy out there?
- And so, God offered the promise of His presence... to go with them to the Promised Land.

And how did He “go” with them? Well, we’re told in **Isaiah 63:11** that **“He set His Holy Spirit among them.”**

- But, again, for us, God has done way more than “set” His Spirit amongst us.
- In **Jeremiah 31:31-34**, God spoke of a new covenant He would make with His people... a **covenant** he would **“write on their hearts.”**
- **Ezekiel** goes further, connecting this new covenant to the Spirit, whom God was going to “place **in** you.” (See 36:26-27/37:14)

This is what happened at **Pentecost**. It was that **moment of history where God poured out the Spirit** on all of us.

- In other words, through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, God is with each us right now.

- In writing to the Corinthians, Paul writes in 6:19-20, **“Don’t you realize that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God?”**

Remember, because of Israel’s disobedience, God was *not* going to lead Israel to the Promised Land. Instead, He was going to send an angel to lead them.

- Realizing what this means, we’ve already seen Moses calling out to God... *“Unless you go with us, what will distinguish us from all the other people on the face of the earth?”*
- You see, for Moses... for all the people of Israel... being a people of His presence is... *more than anything else... what defined who they were as a people.*

So, when God’s people were in exile in Persia, for example, the great hope of the people wasn’t that they’d one day get their homes back in Judah...

- Rather... their hope was in the promised return of God’s presence.
- You see, even worse than the destruction of Jerusalem... even worse than their exile...
- **were Ezekiel’s words in Ezekiel 10** where they were told that the *“glory of the Lord”* had departed from the temple.

God’s glory... His manifest presence... had departed *not* because the temple was destroyed... but because of their ongoing sin against Him.

- And yet God offered them this one great prophetic promise later in **Ezekiel 37:27**.
- He said, **“My dwelling place will be with them; I will be their God and they will be My people.”** →Selah

When I think about Moses and all his strengths as a leader, what always gets my attention... more than anything else... is his love for the Father’s presence.

- I read this story from Exodus 33 and say, *“God, I want to be more like that!”*

- **Whenever Israel would stop to pitch their tents**, Moses would set up a tent outside the camp, called the "Tent of Meeting".
- We read about this in **verse 7-11 of Exodus 33**. Anyone could have come and met with the Lord in the Tent of Meeting... that's what it was for.
- But we read that they pretty much left that up to Moses.

The people **chose to live out their relationship with God** through Moses... even though God was inviting all of them to share in His presence.

- Truth is, it wasn't just that God wanted them to come into His presence... **He also wanted to be in theirs...** He wanted to be their God.
- Actually, **there was one person**, who, like Moses, not only went to the tent of meeting but never wanted to leave... that was Joshua.

Joshua got it. He had such a heart for God's presence! So, it's no surprise that He was the one God chose to lead Israel after Moses.

- You see, **God values, above any other thing**, our heart for His presence.
- Isn't it interesting, then, that the first thing Adam and Eve did after they sinned was to **hide from His presence**?

That's **why God writes in Isaiah 1:11...** *"The multitude of your sacrifices-- what are they to me?" says the LORD. "I have more than enough of burnt offerings..."*

- You see, **what God wants... is you...** not your service, not your sacrifice... but you in His presence.
- All through Scripture, God shares His heart, *"And I will be their God and they will be My people."* (ex. Jeremiah 32)

You see, what will ultimately make us effective **as a church** and as **individuals within the church** aren't so much the skills and talents that we bring to the table.

- The people God chose to lead... like Moses, Joshua, and David... were people whose passion was His presence!

- You see, **God will not use us as a congregation** to bless this region because of our cleverness or our programs...
- But He will **work powerfully through people whose passion is His presence.**

To the degree that we are passionate about surrendering our lives to His will...

- **To the degree that we're passionate about His presence...** committed to worshipping Him, **not simply with our songs** but with our lives...
- to that degree will we experience the kind of intimacy with Him that we were created for.
- And to that degree **will we be able to minister His love and life and power** to the world around us...
- Because **authority and power and impact flow out of intimacy.**

Carol Wimber was once asked what she felt was the "secret" of the Vineyard's growth.

- From 30 people in their living room 30 years ago to over 2000 churches in nearly 80 nations, there was only one answer she could give. **His presence.**
- But the key had little to do with programs or strategy... it was about His presence.

This church was built on this foundation. **Far more than anything we can do in and of ourselves,**

- what I dream of is a community of people who are passionate about Him... passionate about finding their **home**, their **rest**, in His presence.
- Guys, **if I'm aware of anything in my life**, then this one thing I know with all of my heart...
- that God is calling us back to a deeper, more passionate relationship with Him... back into a life of abiding in His presence through the Holy Spirit.

At the end of the day, that is **the only legacy I want for us as a church...** to have been a church utterly in love with Him...

- passionate about **His presence and the power** that flows from it.
- When I think about the reputation that I dream of having as a church, my hope is that...
- For whatever else we have going for us, people would be saying:
- *“I’ve heard they are so passionate about the Father’s presence... they’re so hungry for Jesus... their so thirsty for the things of the Spirit.”*

In **2nd Chronicles 5**, we read about how the priests were worshipping the Lord as they were bringing the Ark of the Covenant into the new temple...

- And **as they were doing that**, God’s presence fell on them... so much so that they just fell to their knees.
- They **put their faces to the ground** and praised Him saying, *“He is good and His love endures forever.”*
- We’re then told in **verse 13** *“at that moment a thick cloud filled the Temple of the Lord. The priests could not continue their service because of the cloud, for the glorious presence of the Lord filled the Temple of God.”*

Soon after, **as Solomon was dedicating the temple to the Lord**, the same thing happened in **chapter 7:1-3**.

When Solomon finished praying, fire flashed down from heaven and burned up the burnt offerings and sacrifices, and the glorious presence of the Lord filled the Temple. 2 The priests could not enter the Temple of the Lord because the glorious presence of the Lord filled it. 3 When all the people of Israel saw the fire coming down and the glorious presence of the Lord filling the Temple, they fell face down on the ground and worshiped and praised the Lord, saying, “He is good!^[SEP] His faithful love endures forever!”

It’s in this context that the Lord spoke to them saying, **“If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.”**

- He said that if we **humble ourselves** and **seek His face**... then He will come to heal and restore.

- You see, **over and over again, God shows us what it is He truly values.**
- It isn't our programs and our religious zeal... **it's our passion for Him...** that **passion to seek His face** in authentic worship...
- That simple passion for His presence.

This isn't easy for us, is it? In so many cases, **our default mode is to make our ministries or our jobs** our passion rather than Him.

- But those things aren't what's most important.
- You see, our ultimate calling... is to find our place in His Presence... to abide in Him.
- It's what anchored David even through the most difficult days of his life.
- **In Psalm 23:4 he wrote, "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me..."**

I think of David's words in **Psalm 84:1-2**, "*How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord Almighty. My soul yearns, even faints for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh cry out for the Living God.*"

- **Do you hear that?** "*My passion for the presence of God is so strong that I could faint.*"
- Again, that's the same kind of passion Moses had.

I think about God's promise to Moses... how God Himself would lead them to the Promised Land.

- That's just what Moses was asking Him for... **but when he got that**, it still wasn't enough. Moses wanted more.
- Look at what he says in verse 18, "***Now show me Your glory!***"
- In just a short period of time, Moses had seen the Lord part the Red Sea... He had seen the Lord deliver Israel from Egyptian captivity...

You would have thought that, in Moses' mind, He'd already seen God's glory!

- And yet, **the glory Moses wanted was so much more than those outward miracles...**

- You see, when Moses cried out to God, "Show me Your Glory," Moses was expressing a heart passionate **to know God... to be in His presence... to be wrapped up** in God's embrace.
- SHOW ME YOUR GLORY, LORD!

The **Hebrew word for glory in the OT is Kabod**... it literally means "weight"... the kind of weight that leaves an impression on those who are touched by it...

- Like a **man's weight pressed into the sand** while walking on the beach.
- You see, what Moses was saying to God was, "*Lord, I want who You are to make an eternal impression on my life*"
- It was this heart... that caused God to call Moses a "**friend of God**".

Remember... Moses could have been the **Prince of Egypt**... but compared to God's presence... any earthly ambition meant nothing.

- The **NT word for glory is Doxa**, which can be **defined as beauty**.
- The idea of **weight & beauty together** express what Moses was crying out for.
- It is what David was hungering for when he wrote in **Psalm 27**...
- "***One thing I have asked from the Lord, that I shall seek. That I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life... to behold the beauty of the Lord and to meditate in His temple.***"

Moses **didn't want the promise** of God's presence... He **didn't want the theology** regarding God's presence...

- He **wanted the reality of God's presence in His life**... and he wanted that reality to make an eternal imprint on His life.
- That's why he says to God, in **verse 13**, "***If you are pleased with me, teach me your ways that I may know You more!***"

He wanted to know God more! Moses had seen God's glorious works... but the glory he really longed for was God Himself.

- Jesus Himself prayed that you and I would also experience this in **our** lives.

- In **John 17:24**, Jesus prayed, "*Father, I want those you have given me... to see my glory.*"

Do you want to see His glory? Do you want the **weight of God's beauty imprinted on your life?**

- Do you want to experience deeper intimacy with the Lord in your everyday life?
- In **Psalm 27:8**, God calls to David saying, "**Seek My face**". The simplicity of David's response has always touched me.
- David responds, saying, "*with all my heart, O Lord, Your face will I seek.*"

WILL YOU STAND UP?

The Spirit is here this morning to strike that match in you again! He's inviting YOU just as He had invited David... "Seek My Face".

- How will we respond? Truth is, a lot of us have grown tired and discouraged... we've lost that passion for God's presence we once had.
- Perhaps you realize that to some degree, you really have lost your first love.
- If so, would you cry out to the Lord as David did in Psalm 51, "**Lord, restore to me the joy of my salvation.**"

"Holy Spirit, would you infuse my heart with a renewed passion for Jesus. Would you reignite my life with the kind of love I once experienced in my life for You."

- Jesus said in **John 7**, "*Come to Me all you who are hungry?*"
- Are you hungry this morning? If so... if you're hungry for Him... if you're hungry for more of Him... then would you come to Him this morning.

When speaking to the Samaritan Woman in **John 4**, Jesus said to her in **verse 10** what I believe He's saying to us this morning...

- "*If you only knew the gift God has for you and who you are speaking to, you would ask Me, and I would give you Living Water.*"

- God wants to pour out His Living Water of Refreshing this morning.

*"Dear Father, I need You. I acknowledge that I have been directing my own life and that, as a result, I have sinned against You. I thank You that You have forgiven my sins through Christ's death on the cross for me. I now invite Christ to again take His place on the throne of my life. Fill me with the Holy Spirit as You **commanded** me to be filled, and as You **promised** in Your Word that You would do if I asked in faith. I now thank You for directing my life and for filling me with the Holy Spirit."*

Closing Prayer/Benediction from 2 Corinthians 13:14... *"May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all."*