

St Martins C3 – February 6, 2022

Called to be – Pursuers of God's Presence

Sermon Summary:

Being in God's presence changes us. When we encounter the God who created us, it ought to be a powerful experience. Because something of the holiness, glory and power of God is imparted into us. Therefore, the pursuit of experiencing the presence of God is one of the worthiest of all life's pursuits. However, many people, (including some Christians) believe in God, but have not personally encountered the power of God's presence. They may even hear of other people's experience of God and seek that themselves, but their experience falls short of their expectation.

When God delivered the Israelites from Egypt, around 4,000 years ago, the Israelites witnessed the power of God. However, for all of them, (except Moses and Aaron), they didn't experience God personally. But that was about to change when they reached Mt Sinai.

Read: Exodus 20: 18-21 (NLT)

God has now revealed Himself to Moses and the people of Israel. There is now a much greater awareness of who God is and what He is like. God has revealed that:

- 1) He wants everyone to come into His presence.**
- 2) However, there is a cost, we have to come with holiness.**
- 3) If you choose to hold back, you will miss out.**

So, the Israelites decide that it is too scary for them to meet personally with God, so they send Moses to do it. Moses receives

the benefit of experiencing God's presence and engaging with God face to face on a daily basis. (Ex 33:11)

Read: Exodus 33:17-23

Being in God's presence CHANGES Moses and IMPACTS those around him.

Read: 2 Corinthians 3:4-18

Paul's point here is that we have received a much greater revelation of God in Christ and through the presence of the Holy Spirit, than the revelation Moses received at Sinai. If the presence of God at Sinai brought Moses and Israel a powerful revelation of God's glory and powerful experience of God's presence, how much more will the presence of the Holy Spirit bring all those things to us.

One of the main reasons God sent His Holy Spirit to be present in His church, is that His children would be changed and empowered as He brought His presence among them.

Christ has made us Holy, so we can be in the God's presence. Christ has released His Holy Spirit to His people. Therefore, as we follow the Spirit's leadings and draw closer to God, we will SEE and REFLECT the glory of the Lord.

I accept there is an element of MYSTERY to all this. How come, there are times when we can have dramatic experiences of God in prayer or worship and other times we don't? – I don't know why this is the case, but I do know that God has called us to not

become cynical, but stay grateful and expectant, when we come to meet with Him.

Will 2022 be a year when you experience God in a deeper way, because you are pursuing Him with expectancy?

Suggested questions for Connect Group discussions:

What has God done through Christ to give us greater access to His presence?

Why should our experience of God's glory be greater now than in the time of Moses?

What is it about being in the presence of God that changes us?

How has being in God's presence changed you?

What more of God do you believe God has for you to experience, that you haven't fully experienced yet?

What might coming to prayer or worship with a higher level of expectancy look like for you?

As you reflect on this message, what is God revealing to you about being a pursuer of Him and His presence?

Monday's Devotion – In Christ Alone.

Hebrews 1:1-3a

Long ago God spoke many times and in many ways to our ancestors through the prophets. And now in these final days, he has spoken to us through his Son. God promised everything to the Son as an inheritance, and through the Son he created the universe. The Son radiates God's own glory and expresses the very character of God, and he sustains everything by the mighty power of his command.

This week we are going to explore some of the things the book of Hebrews reveals regarding experiencing the presence of God.

Right at the beginning of the book the author lays the foundation to experiencing God's presence. Every current revelation of God is going to come from His Son, Jesus.

Jesus fully represents God, because He IS God. If we want to know what God is like, we only need to look at Jesus' life and character.

Let's take some time today to ponder on the attributes we see expressed in Jesus' life. Ponder on how GOOD Jesus was. Ponder on the TRUTH that Jesus revealed. Ponder on how he related to His Father. Ponder on His WISDOM and GRACE.

As you reflect on who Jesus is today, may God give you a greater revelation of His character. As He does that, may He draw you deeper into His presence.

Tuesday's Devotion – Holy before Him.

Hebrews 10:14

Because by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.

Sin will put a barrier between us and God. God is Holy and therefore is repulsed by sin. Anything attached to sin in His presence will be consumed. (12:28) Therefore, we have to be cleansed from our sin before coming in to God's presence.

One of the main themes of Hebrews is that Jesus is the one who has done exactly that for us. Only Jesus was Holy enough and powerful enough to stand in the gap between us and God and cleanse us from all sin and make us Holy in God's sight.

What we read in this verse above is that this cleansing from sin and making us right with God, is not just a one-time process but an ongoing process.

Don't get hung up on the words here, in the Greek perfect, holy and complete have all the same meaning. Therefore, what is being communicated here is that the work Christ is doing in us is one where He has made us Holy and is continuing to make us Holy. Or, He is perfecting those who are called to be perfected by God.

As we seek to be pursuers of God and His presence, may we seek a revelation of who Christ is and then seek a revelation of what He has done and is doing in us. May we repent of all sin and approach God's presence with clean hearts and minds. Cleansed by Christ.

Wednesday's Devotion – Draw near to God

Hebrews 10: 19 & 22

“Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place (the presence of God) by the blood of Jesus... let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith.”

We can now confidently approach God, because Christ has made us Holy. This is one of the great themes in the book of Hebrews. The goal in our relationship with God, isn't just to be free of our sin, but to come into God's presence and therefore, into a close relationship with Him. Let us not be the ones that do the preparation, yet don't participate in the actual event.

An analogy of this could be being invited to a royal ball. Of course this would be a great privilege. You would get to be in the presence of royalty. Therefore, you would prepare appropriately. You would make sure you are clean and smelling nice. Then you would choose an appropriate outfit and accessories. (And pull up in your hired Aston Martin 😊) However, it would be then quite bizarre to not actually go into the ballroom. The point of the preparation is to attend the event. Likewise, the main event is for us to enjoy time in God's presence and be changed by that time with Him. Therefore, let us not hold back. Let's not crouch in the corner hoping not to be noticed. Let us draw near to our host and get to know Him.

One of the ways we can show God that we value His presence is setting aside time in worship and prayer and just reflect on who He is and what He might be saying to us. How about taking some time and doing that today.

Thursday's Devotion – What are you asking for?

Hebrews 4:16

Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

There is always something that we need from God. As we mature spiritually, we probably consider carefully the requests that we bring to God, but that doesn't change the fact that God wants to bless His children.

After laying the foundation that we can now approach God with confidence because of our trust in who Jesus is and what He has done for us, we are now reminded to ask for help in our time of need.

God wants to be the one we go to when we are in need. The problem in our western world is that we become so used to being self-sufficient. We value our independence and our resourcefulness. Most of the time, this is a good thing, but the problem is, we can easily leave God out of any involvement in our lives.

What we learn here, is that God wants to be involved. He wants us to regularly come into His presence. He wants us to reflect with Him as to what we are to do and what we need from Him, to do what He has called us to do. So, what are you going to ask God for today?

Friday's Devotion – Persevere

Hebrews 10: 35-36

“So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded. You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised.”

The book of Hebrews was probably written a couple of decades after the death and resurrection of Jesus. A long enough time for the first followers of Christ to have been Christians for most of their adult lives. It seems from elsewhere in the book that some of them were beginning to let their faith slip. They were taking a more relaxed view on sin and were being discouraged with their ministry efforts not going as expected.

A big theme in the book of Hebrews is a call to persevere. The call goes out to stand strong in our faith as it will be rewarded. God knows the bigger picture that we can't see. Don't start strong and end poorly.

The same temptation still exist today. We can easily be distracted by other things. We can become discouraged when we don't see what we have prayed for. We can easily be tempted to allow what we think are small compromises regarding sin to creep into our lives, which in turn grow into sinful habits. So, how do we combat these temptations? - *Let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith....Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. (Hebrews 12:1-3)*