

Rev. Janet Doyle
Elmer Presbyterian Church
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Scripture: Psalm 139

Sermon: Sense His Nearness

Years ago, a Christian preacher went to India, and there he saw Hindu worshipers tapping on trees and rocks asking the gods they believed in if they were present: “Are you there? Are you there?”

Our scriptures tell us that we never have to ask that question even though we do. God is here. Wherever we are; He is always near us.

This morning we are looking at Psalm 139 and the omnipresence of God. What does “omnipresence” mean? Well, “Omni” means “ALL” and “presence” means “HERE.” It means that God is always present; He is everywhere.

Two weeks ago, we talked about giving our worries and anxieties to God and letting Him carry them. Last week we looked at finding rest for our soul in the presence of God.

Today we are looking at what that means to be in the presence of God and to have a God that is always near us no matter what is happening to us.

Psalm 46 says, “God is our refuge and strength; a very present help in time of need.” God is present with us no matter how difficult life is and we can rest assured that God is faithful.

The Bible contains story after story of life-changing, world-altering encounters with God’s presence. From Moses encountering God face-to-face, to the disciples at Pentecost and Saul on the Road to Damascus, God came near to them all and their lives were changed.

Psalm 139 says, “Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence? If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there!”

David describes God's presence this way in Psalm 16:1, "In your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore."

There is no doubt, when we read our scripture, that God's presence is real then and is real now and God is available to us right now. Rest in the truth of that for a moment.

You can consistently be in God's presence anytime and anywhere.

As Psalm 139 tells us, God created us to experience him. God will never force us to spend time in his presence, but he waits for us to make space in our busy lives to receive what he longs to give us.

Spending time resting in him is meant to be life giving. We need to make time to encounter him, open your heart, and have faith in his word, then you will discover the wellspring of life, joy, love and a transformation that the presence of our God brings to our life.

Isaiah 43:2 says, "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they will not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be scorched, nor will the flame burn you." Psalm 23 says, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me."

God is always with us in our times of anxiety and stress. He is with us during our heartbreak, during our illness, during our financial struggles, during the good times and the bad times, during the pandemic times and post pandemic. God will not give up on you.

It is up to us to realize He is present with us and to act like He is. It is up to us to "practice the presence of the Lord" and consciously rely on Him by faith. In God's presence is fullness of joy. If we would only realize that God is with us every moment of our lives, what a difference it would make and what a comfort we would find in that constant presence! We cannot get away from God! Remember God is everywhere because he loves us.

Psalm 89:15-16 tells us, "Blessed are those who have learned to acclaim you, who walk in the light of your presence, Lord. They rejoice in your name all day long; they celebrate your righteousness."

Did you hear that? “WALK IN THE LIGHT OF HIS PRESENCE.”

God is present with me all day long. All I have to do is walk in His presence. This is an important part of “rejoicing always,” simply acknowledging God’s presence throughout the day, praising Him, and thanking Him for being there with you.

Does your heart long for communion and rest with God throughout the day?

God was with the Israelites in a cloud during the day and a pillar of fire at night. He never left them alone in the journey and He doesn’t leave us alone.

Matthew 28:20 says, “Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” The Holy Spirit comes to live within us when we put our faith in God. We have direct access to God.

So, if God is always present with us, we should learn to walk in His presence aware that He is near, and that the light of His face is shining on us with love each day.

We are to have Christian Mindfulness; being present with God in whatever we are called to do. It is an awareness of the present moment, experiencing God’s active presence in the everyday things of life.

Christian mindfulness means learning to pay attention to God’s presence even when we feel like we are too busy.

God is present with us when we are reading the Bible, as well as when we are cleaning the kitchen; he is present with us when we are singing worship songs and when we are working on a project. Christian mindfulness is simply a matter of recognizing His presence in all of life.

There is a very meaningful book entitled, **The Practice of the Presence of God**, by a 17th century French monk named Brother Lawrence. The book explains how he learned to commune with God throughout his everyday activities. He prayed while he was working. Brother Lawrence spent a lot of time cooking and cleaning the kitchen in the monastery, and he was just as aware of the presence of God in menial tasks as he was in prayer on his knees. Brother Lawrence learned to cultivate the deep presence of God so thoroughly in his own heart that he

was able to joyfully exclaim, "I am doing now what I will do for all eternity. I am blessing God, praising Him, adoring Him and loving Him with all my heart."

For nearly three hundred years this classic book has given both blessing and instruction to those who can be content with nothing less than knowing God in all His majesty and feeling His loving presence throughout each simple day.

Awareness of God's presence is a simple spiritual discipline just like Bible reading. It is possible to practice and learn to be aware of God's presence in our lives.

Psalm 139 says, "O Lord, you have searched me and known me! You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from afar. You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways." God is interested in his children; he is involved with his children's lives. God warmly weaved us together in our mother's womb.

God's people, us, we can withstand "tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine or nakedness, or danger, or sword." (Romans 8:35) Why? "For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor heights nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 8: 38-39)

Brother Lawrence writes in his book, "all spiritual life consists of practicing God's presence, and that anyone who practices it correctly will soon attain spiritual fulfillment. To accomplish this, it is necessary for the heart to be emptied of everything that would offend God. He wants to possess your heart completely. Before any work can be done in your soul, God must be totally in control.

There is no sweeter manner of living in the world than continuous communion with God. If I were a preacher, I would preach nothing but practicing the presence of God. If I were to be responsible for guiding souls in the right direction, I would urge everyone to be aware of God's constant presence, if for no other reason than because His presence is a delight to our souls and spirits."

By faith, consciously live your whole life in the Presence of God. For many people, the greatest challenge of our Christian lives is to truly experience the omnipresence of God, not merely to “know” it in our minds; but to experience God. To truly LIVE and ACT sensing the nearness of God.