



Knowing God Through His Presence

November 24, 2002

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Introduction:

All year long we have been sharing along the lines of knowing God more. We had a 50 day spiritual adventure with seeing the unseen guest. We have approached knowing God in many different ways. I trust if this year has done nothing more for you, it has given you an increased desire to have a deeper intimacy with God. To spend time in His presence, to develop your devotional life and open your heart wider to God and by that you know Him more. This morning we want to look at knowing God by knowing His presence.

The eternal presence of God is conveyed in the name of God – Jehovah-Shammah, which means the Lord is there.

God has always wanted intimacy and closeness with man. We see that from the beginning of creation. God drew near Adam and Eve in the cool of the day so He could have fellowship with them.

God's promise to be with His people was given to Moses in Exodus 3:13-14. God was present with His people in the cloud by day, the pillar of fire by night and at the crossing of the Red Sea. We see from the record left us in II Chronicles 7:1-3 that He was present at the dedication of the temple.

He was present before the worlds were created. He was present when the people of God were in Egypt, when they moved around the desert, when they went into the Promised Land. He was present when Mary conceived Jesus, and gave birth. He was present when Jesus died on the cross and rose again. His presence was real at the time of Pentecost and His presence is still real today.

One of the great promises given to the disciples was – I will never leave you or forsake you. To know His presence is to know Him more.

The story we want to look at this morning is from the history of Israel. God spoke to Moses wanting to use Him to lead the people into the Promised Land. What distressed the people and Moses so greatly was that God told them he would send an angel before them, to drive out their enemies, but he would not go with them Himself. (v 3)

In verse 13 – we see Moses saying to God, teach me your ways, so I may know you and keep finding favor with you.

TEXT: **Exodus 33:14-15**

The LORD replied, "My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest." ¹⁵Then Moses said to him, "If your Presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here."

The word presence here means face or faces. It would indicate that God was communicating He would give Moses and the people of Israel manifestations of his grace and goodness through the whole journey. He would vary His appearances as it would be necessary.

Moses responded that if the Lord would not go up with them and reveal His providence and grace to them, then he knew it would not be possible either to govern such people or support them in the desert. How would these manifestations take place?

The Lord assured Moses in verse 17 that He would do everything Moses had asked Him to do.

Moses asked this question of God. How will anyone know you are pleased with us unless you go with us? What else is different about us from all other people who live on earth? (33:16)

It was the presence of the Lord that Moses recognized and others recognized, that made them different from everyone else around them.

It is God's presence that sets us apart from others.

The Lord showed that he was with them by making His presence known as a cloud.

The cloud most likely represented the Holy Spirit. The Shekinah cloud that indicated God's presence, rested above the tabernacle. When Moses set up the tabernacle, there was a cloud that covered the tent of the congregation, and God's glory filled the tabernacle.

In a practical way the cloud gave them comfort. At night it was warmth, light, and protection from the cold in the desert, and by day it was a protection from the hot sun and kept them from burning up. The cloud also gave them direction for their trip so they wouldn't lose their way.

Whenever we see the cloud in scriptures, it meant that God's presence was near.

When Solomon's temple was dedicated, there was a cloud that filled the temple. There was a cloud that overshadowed Jesus on the mount of transfiguration. The cloud was seen again as Jesus ascended into heaven on the Mount of Olives.

I. Knowing God's presence assures us He is near.

God has always wanted His people to know His presence. He wants to be near His people, and He wants His people to be near Him. In this time in the history of the Israelite people, they needed the visible sign and awareness of God's presence.

He sent quail and manna to them, He provided water for them, He led them, and showed them in a visible way that He was near them.

They were not going to make the trip in a few days. In the book of Numbers the 9th chapter, we see the cloud that covered the tabernacle. It looked like a pillar of fire by night, and a cloud by day.

Whenever the cloud lifted, the people of Israel would set out to follow the presence of the Lord. When the cloud remained still over the tabernacle, then the people of God would not leave camp, and they would rest there until the cloud moved again. They had to stay close to God's presence. They didn't have to work, clothes didn't wear out, food was sent to them, and God provided everything they needed.

II. Knowing God's presence assures accurate direction.

Being able to see the cloud helped them to follow obediently when God directed them to move, or to stay put.

Moses was very clear that he did not want to move anywhere unless God's presence was with them. It was not important how long they camped where they did – whether one day, or a month, or a year. What was important was they stayed near God. The path was clear for them as long as they did not get away from the cloud. As long as they stayed near the visible presence of the Lord, they would not get lost on their journey.

There are times in taking a trip that I look at the map and get lost. Somehow I haven't followed the directions and when that happens unless I correct my

course, I end up at some other destination than where I determined I wanted to be.

It is true as well that when God's presence is active in our lives, we can know His direction and follow where He leads us, and by following Him, we will end up where He wants us.

The direction God gives is perfect. The people of Israel probably thought when they came to the Red Sea that there had been some mistake, as the enemy was behind them. But when they were led through the sea, they realized that which was life and freedom for them, became death and disaster for their enemies.

God knows what He is doing and what He has in mind for your life. Even if it looks like there is no way out, when He is leading, and we stay near, he will make a way.

It was probably because of the cloud and pillar of fire, the people couldn't see ahead of them. They always followed the leading of that which represented to them the presence of God. They never went ahead of it.

There are times the same is true for us. We may not be able to see ahead where God is leading us, or what might be just ahead of us. However, if we are sure of His presence, obedient to His leading, we will end up being provided for, and guided through this journey of life.

III. Knowing God's presence brings us joy

David writes that he found fullness of joy in God's presence. I find it interesting in this Psalm to see that he links together the path of life and fullness of joy in God's presence. God wants to lead us and bring joy to our life and we find those things from being near Him, and seeking His face.

Conclusion:

He is here with us. He has sent His presence in the Person of the Holy Spirit. We are assured of His nearness, of accurate direction, and of joy because of His presence. Seek His face, and draw near Him, and you will discover things about God that you never knew before.

Psalm 16:11

You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.

Psalm 21:6

Surely you have granted him eternal blessings and made him glad with the joy of your presence

IV. How can I know God's presence?

We certainly don't go around today looking for a cloud to lead us. We have been given great and precious promises from the Word of God. We can be near God by seeking His face through His word.

Seek His face. In **1 Chronicles 16:11** it says, "Look to the LORD and his strength; seek his face always."

Psalm 27:8

My heart says of you, "Seek his face!" Your face, LORD, I will seek.

Psalm 105:4

Look to the LORD and his strength; seek His face always.

The word "seek" means to search out or strive after. To see one's face, one has to be close. There are features about someone's face that communicate volumes to us. Generally by looking we can tell a lot about people by seeing their face.

Julie and I happened to be somewhere a few weeks ago, and just by looking at a woman's face in the crowd, it was obvious she had suffered much physical and emotional pain through out her life.

We can be near God by spending time in prayer.

We are to walk in the spirit and be led by the spirit. If the cloud was a way God showed Himself to His people, then His Holy Spirit is another way He shows Himself to be near His people today.