

**Sermon Title:** Living in the Reality of God's Presence

**Series:** Seeking God's Kingdom, Part 33

**Scripture:** Psalm 139

**Main Takeaway:** The King of all our moments is present with us in our moments.

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I realized this week that I preached Psalm 139 almost two years ago.

And while I was reading through that old sermon...

I came across something I forgot I said.

It wasn't the main point of the sermon.

It was just a side comment where I said:

**[SLIDE 1] Our faith in Jesus isn't what makes Him King of kings. He's King whether we believe it or not. So when we put our believing loyalty in Him, we're acknowledging the reality that's already around us.**

Looking back over the past couple years...

I believe the Lord's been showing me something.

Back then...

I was emphasizing David's loyalty to the LORD.

Psalm 139 clearly shows that.

But lately,

I've been thinking about how **David emphasized the LORD's presence.**

Honestly, these past several months have caused me to reflect on the reality of God's presence.

Scripture teaches that the LORD is with us...

*Always.*

**Deuteronomy 31:6**... Moses said:

"the LORD your God goes with you;

he will never leave you nor forsake you."

**Matthew 28:20**... Jesus said:

“Surely I am with you *always*, to the very end of the age.”

I’ve preached the fact that the LORD is with us—

I don’t know how many times...

Probably almost every sermon...

Yet I have to admit...

I don’t always live like that’s true.

I don’t know if this is just a “me” thing...

Or if you’ll resonate with this...

But I’ve been thinking about how we spend time with God.

We’re taught to set aside time for God in our day.

Go to Him in prayer.

Talk to Him...

Any time, anywhere, about anything.

And that’s all good.

We *should* be doing those things!

But even in that...

I wonder if the way we think about spending time with God...

Has been shaped more by today’s culture than by Scripture.

## **[SLIDE 2] Phone Illustration Image**

For example...

We tend to treat prayer like a phone call...

God always picks up...

He’s always willing to listen...

He wants us to talk to Him...

But what if instead of scheduling our next appointment with God...

What if we realized He’s already with us?

Instead of feeling like we need to call Him up...  
What if we realized He's already in the room?

**So here's what I've been wondering...**

We *know* that...

**[SLIDE 3] Jesus is always *with* us. But do we live like that's true?**

You know...  
It wasn't in my notes...  
But toward the end of last week's sermon...  
I felt led to comment on the LORD's presence...

And I asked:  
*Does the LORD just visit us on the weekends and then go home?*

When we're living life at 100mph...  
It's easy to miss the fact that the LORD is right there with us...  
*Literally.*

This is what we've been seeing in our Samuel series.

The LORD was *with* Hannah in her anguish...  
The LORD was *with* Samuel and spoke through him...  
The LORD was *with* David and empowered him by His Spirit...

And as David reflected on his life...  
He wrote in Psalm 139...

**[SLIDE 4] Psalm 139:7-8 - Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.**

I've always loved verses like these.  
They speak of God's power and presence.

But what I'm finding is that...  
I don't think David was just giving us a theology lesson...  
David was showing us the reality in which we live.

God's presence is not limited by GPS coordinates.  
He's not even limited by time.

David says...  
*"If I go to the heavens... You're there."*  
*"If I go to the depths... You're there."*

There is nowhere David can imagine going where God *isn't* present!

Theologians have a word for this...  
They call it God's omnipresence.

That just means:  
**God is present everywhere.**

And depending on our relationship with Him...  
That can either be comforting...  
Or sobering.

But for those who put their faith in Jesus...  
The reality is...

**[SLIDE 5] Followers of Jesus are never alone.**

And I'm sure all of us agree with that...

But the reason for this sermon is for us to ask ourselves...

But are we *living* it?

Does our life reflect the truth that Jesus is always with us?

Whether we're watching TV...  
Or at work...  
Or school...

Or the grocery store...  
Or filling up at the gas station...

**Or...**

At Hersheypark...  
Strapped into a little car...  
Going 75 miles an hour and 200ft straight up...

**I'm just saying...**

Do we live in the reality that His presence is *already* with us...  
Or do we live as though He's distant...  
And waiting for our call?

The fact is...  
We don't need to invite God's presence into the room...  
He's already here.

We may not physically see Him...  
But He's with us.

This reminds me of a little book I read years ago.  
It's called: *The Practice of the Presence of God*.

It's about a man called Brother Lawrence who lived in the 1600's...  
He lived in a Paris monastery and worked there in the kitchen.

The book says...

**[SLIDE 6] "Brother Lawrence insisted that, to be constantly aware of God's presence, it is necessary to form the habit of continually talking with Him throughout each day."<sup>1</sup>**

That idea comes from 1 Thessalonians 5:17, which says:  
"Pray continually."

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<sup>1</sup> Brother Lawrence, *The Practice of the Presence of God* (New Kensington, PA: Whitaker House, 1982).

So, while doing dishes...  
Brother Lawrence would talk to God... *out loud*...  
Because **he knew God was already there.**

I actually started doing this...  
When I'm by myself...  
Rather than close my eyes...  
I just talk as though He's right there...

Because He is.

I'm reminded of how the LORD was with Samuel as he grew up...  
And how later in life,  
We see Samuel and the LORD talking...  
almost casually.

I wonder if we've lost some of that.  
I'm not saying we should expect to hear directly from the LORD...  
But I am saying that...

Whether we're being led to green pastures...  
Or walking through the darkest valley...  
The LORD is literally with us every step of the way.

And the truth is...

**[SLIDE 7] God's desire has always been to be present with His people.**

From the very beginning...  
In the Garden of Eden...  
Adam and Eve walked and talked with God.

His presence was normal...  
So much so that they actually could hear Him walking in the Garden.

This was what God wanted.  
He wanted to expand His family...  
He wanted to be present with them...

But then sin entered the world...  
And that's where things started to shift.

We see Adam and Eve trying to hide from God...  
Then they're cast out of Eden.

And so in this way...

The LORD's presence isn't just about physical location...  
It's also about relationship.

**[SLIDE 8] Our relationship with the LORD directly impacts the kind of presence that's with us.**

Imagine two people show up at your door.

One is your best friend...  
And the other is someone you've never met before.

Both are present...  
But you have a very different relationship between the two.

And so when Adam and Eve sinned...  
Their sin broke the relationship they once had with God.

God's omnipresence didn't change...  
But their fellowship with Him did.

But ever since then...  
God hasn't stopped pursuing His people...

He appeared to Abraham.

He passed in front of Moses.

He went before Israel in a pillar of fire in the wilderness.

He revealed Himself to Samuel.

And when David inquired of the LORD...  
I don't think he was trying to get God's attention.

David already knew the LORD was with him.

That's why David could say in Psalm 16...

**[SLIDE 9] Psalm 16:8 - I have set the LORD always before me...**

Meaning...

David chose to live in the reality that he was never alone.

Imagine how that kind of awareness could impact our everyday life...

Again...

Followers of Jesus are never alone.

We're not left by ourselves in the dark valleys...

**[SLIDE 10] The Christian life isn't about getting into God's presence. It's about living every day in the reality that He's already here.**

Let's revisit a moment in David's life.

I know I've talked about this a couple times...

But do you remember the moment David came back to his hometown?

Everything was destroyed...

His family was taken...

The wives and children of his men were taken...

And they all just broke down... hard.

It's not everyday you see a bunch of warrior men crying together.

But in all seriousness...

The worst possible thing they could imagine happening...

Happened.

And so David was "greatly distressed."

His men were "bitter in spirit."



But even in that moment...

**[SLIDE 11] 1 Samuel 30:6 - David found strength in the LORD his God.**

That only makes sense if David truly believed the LORD was with him.

David...  
was not...  
alone.

And he knew it.

That's why David could say...

**[SLIDE 12] Psalm 139:8 - "If I go up to the heavens, you are there; If I make my bed in the depths, you are there."**

The same is true for us today.

This wasn't just David's reality.

It's *our reality*.

If you've put your faith and trust in Jesus...

**You don't have to wonder whether or not He's with you.**

Every day...

Every moment...

Every heartbeat...

**You can be SURE that He's with you...**

Because the LORD's presence has everything to do with the gospel.

But maybe you're wondering...

**How do we really know?**

Is it just a feeling?  
Is it wishful thinking?  
Is it just because the Bible says so?

No.

We *know* because God didn't remain distant.

**Jesus came to us.**

Literally... the Creator *entered* His creation.

**[SLIDE 13] John 1:14 - The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.**

That was the beginning of God's restoration plan.

In Eden...  
Humanity hid from God because of their sin.

In Jesus...  
God came to humanity to restore what sin had broken.

And one day...  
God's plan will be fulfilled...

**[SLIDE 14] Revelation 21:3 - I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will  dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God."**

God's story begins by dwelling with humanity...  
It continues with God pursuing humanity...  
And it ends with God dwelling with humanity forever.

The whole story is about God reconciling the world to Himself in Christ.<sup>2</sup>

We're still in that middle part.

God is still pursuing humanity...

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<sup>2</sup> 2 Corinthians 5:19

And He uses us to participate in that mission.

The Sunday School class is currently going through 2 Peter...

You should consider joining if you haven't already – 8:15 every Sunday.

Last Sunday they studied a passage that talks about participating...

Listen to this...

**[SLIDE 15] 2 Peter 1:3 - His divine power [the power of Jesus] has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.**

That sounds like Psalm 23...

*"The LORD is my Shepherd,  
I lack nothing."*

He gives us everything we need — our daily bread...

So that we can live a life according to how He's called us to live.

**So how do we live a godly life?**

Check this out...

**[SLIDE 16] 2 Peter 1:4 - Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.**

**What does it mean to participate in the divine nature?**

I don't think Peter is saying we become little gods.

He's saying that through Jesus...

Through Jesus...

God's own life is now at work in us because His Spirit dwells within us.

The presence of God isn't merely beside us...

He's within us.

That's why we can “participate” with Him.  
We're literally doing the LORD's will *WITH* Him.

Think about it this way...

**[SLIDE 17] Participation assumes presence.**

And so this is why Jesus said in John 15...

**[SLIDE 18] John 15:5 - “I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me [abide in me] and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.”**

Notice the language of relationship.

“...remain in me and I in you...”

Jesus isn't describing a distant King.

He's describing a shared life.

And he says...

*“...apart from me you can do nothing.”*

In a way...

Jesus is correcting one of our biggest modern assumptions...

We sometimes assume:

*“I can do the Christian life if I just try harder.”*

Jesus says: *“No. You can't.”*

**The godly life that He calls us to...  
Comes from abiding.**

And so what's really been on my heart lately is that...

**[SLIDE 19] Walking through this life of faith is about learning to live every day with Him. He's already here... so let's live in that truth.**

But what does that actually look like?

What does living with Jesus look like on an ordinary Tuesday...

Or even when life completely falls apart?

There was a song we sang earlier called *Forever Reign*.

And the third verse says...

***You are here...***

***You are here...***

***In Your presence I'm made whole.***

That sounds like the verse I've been circling throughout this entire sermon series:

**[SLIDE 20] James 1:4 - Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.**

Perseverance isn't something we do on our own.

That's exactly what David discovered.

He found strength in the LORD because he knew the LORD was with him.

And the same is true for us.

**Perseverance is something we do WITH Jesus.**

James was talking about trials and hardships...

And it strikes me that...

When life gets hard...

Sometimes our response to trials is that we want to fix them as quickly as possible.

We're willing to get that new devotional...

Or Amazon Prime that Christian book someone recommended...

There's nothing wrong with that.

Christian resources can be helpful.

**But I wonder...**

**If sometimes we're using those tools...**

**To fix our feelings...**

**Rather than simply...**

***Resting* in God's presence...**

***Remaining* in His Word...**

**And *waiting* patiently on Him.**

**Because that's what it looks like to "let perseverance finish its work."**

Personally, I'm more and more convinced that...

The Christian life is about more than trying to fit Jesus into our day.

Growing mature and complete isn't merely about scheduling time with God.

Instead...

It's about learning to live every day...

Every moment...

In the reality of His presence.

Think about it like this...

**[SLIDE 21] The King of all our moments is present with us in every moment.**

And when we're living in that reality...

**We lack nothing.**

**Because He's with us...**

**Always.**

**To the very end of the age.**

**Let's Pray**