

I WILL BE WITH YOU ALWAYS

Most of you know the story of Job. Job is a good man who goes through a terrible time of suffering. His friends tell him it is because he has done wrong. Job himself complains to God. In the end, God answers Job with a series of unanswerable questions which do not address the issue at all of why Job is suffering. They simply show God's greatness. But one of the commentators makes this observation. What brings Job great peace is simply that God speaks. God is present. Similar to Matthew 28:20. Very last verse of Matthew.

And it is this profoundly simple truth that I want to focus on today. Because it is so simple and yet so profound and its reality if we could grasp it is so life changing. Job says, "I had only heard about you before but now I have seen you with my own eyes." Job became aware of the presence of God and this changed how he saw things.

Context for the promise in Matthew is one of the many appearances of Jesus after the resurrection, when he gives the great commission. It is a daunting commission given to a young group of men.

The word "always" is a translation of a phrase. Only used here: "the whole of every day." It is not like God is with us when we come to church. It is not like there are times when God is with us and other times when he leaves us on our own. He is with us every hour of the day. Waking, sleeping, working, playing, watching TV.

His presence means we work both for Jesus and with Jesus. Jesus is already at work in the world, and our role is simply to cooperate with what he is already doing. We don't bring the presence of God into our places of work. He is already present and at work in our workplace. He is at work everywhere. Our role is to say, God, you are already present in this place. How can I cooperate with what you are already doing? We work alongside him. 1 Corinthians 3:9 We are God's workers. This is who you work for. Not your boss. Or a business. You work for God. That is why he says we are to work with enthusiasm (Ephesians 6:7-8, NLT) But he is not an absent boss. He is working alongside us.

His presence means we are never out of his sight. It means God knows exactly what is happening to us. He knew what was happening to Job, and for reasons that are

never explained, he allowed it to happen. But it does not mean that he has left Job.

His presence means we have access to this power. Whatever we are doing we don't have to do in our own strength. We can press into the power of God that Paul's says is at work in our lives. The same power that raised Jesus Christ from the dead. Ephesians 1:19

His presence means we can know peace. Jesus is right alongside us, no matter what is happening. God is working out his purposes in this world. Why do we have to worry when the king of kings is working alongside us. What power is stronger than God's?

His presence means direction. He is right there alongside of us. My yoke is easy says Jesus. If we are yoked to Jesus, then he will direct us if we don't fight against the yoke. If he led him take the lead. Matthew 11:29

His presence means comfort. He understands pain and suffering and loss. He was betrayed by one of his closest friends. He was tortured such that Isaiah says he was not recognizable as a human. When we are suffering, it is always good to have someone who has been through the same thing. They can empathize because they have been through the same thing. That is Jesus.

"Even to the end of the age." Jesus predicted earthquakes, war, famine, disease suffering. Rejection of God. False prophets. In the midst of all of this it is easy to think that God has left us. Or to get anxious.

How can we live out this truth? Jesus is with us but he is not physically with us. So how is he with us.

- A By presence of the Holy Spirit Every believer has the Spirit of God, i.e. one part of the Trinity of God, living in them. Not abstract concept.
- B Through other believers.
- C Word.

What do we do when we don't feel God is with us?

There is a subjective sense of the presence of God. I.e. at a church meeting the preacher might say, "there is such a strong sense of the presence of God here today." This is subjective. Some might be aware of this and some might not.



We need to remind ourselves of the facts. Just because I don't feel God is present doesn't mean he is not. Our feelings are fickle and have to be examined. Our culture today puts a lot of weight on subjective reality. People talk about my truth. That is an oxymoron. There is not such thing as my truth. There can be my feelings. There can be my beliefs. But truth is objective.

The reality is that often we are not consciously aware that God is with us. So we need to remind ourselves of this fact. Even speak it out. God, you are here with me. God I can't feel you at the moment, but you are here with me. Throughout the day we can stop for 1 minute to do this.

Ask God to reveal if there is anything that is grieving him. When we do something that offends someone, it creates a barrier between us. Sometimes our sin can hinder us from experiencing the presence of God, so we should check.

Sometimes we experience the presence of God through other people. What we fail to do is recognize this is "God with us". WE can't see that when someone visits us or does something kind for us, or encourages us, that this is Jesus with us. Sometime God will minister to us through unlikely people. Look back at the previous day to see where God has been at work. I often look back and can't see anything. But she the issue is not whether God has been at work or not, the issue is that I am not looking hard enough. Sometimes just some one smiling at us can be an encouragement during a hard day. Have we thought about the fact that smile is a reflection of the heart of God towards us. That smile was a gift from God. God's presence himself to you.

How did God - all powerful and all Almighty - show us his presence? Because it is not as if God were not present before Jesus came into the world. God has been present in the world from it's inception. God has always been present and active in our world. But how did God show his presence. He sent Jesus. He came in human form. And sometimes the only way we can experience the presence of God is through other people. A hug. The words of encouragement of a friend. A gift that is totally unexpected. We need the experience to know his presence.

Another way when we feel God is not present is to read the Bible because it is often through the Word that God speaks. So often God will use his word to speak to us in a way that is relevant to our lives. My recommendation is that you read the Word systematically. In this way you

are not manipulating your reading to read what you want to hear. Amazed at how often my reading for that day is of relevance. Because I read systematically, I know this has to be God speaking. And if God is speaking through his Word, then God must be present. This is what Job experienced. God had appeared to be absent in his suffering. His friends were doing a bad job of representing God to him. And when God is silent, it is easy for us to assume that God is absent. But he is not absent. Why? Because he has promised us this and he keeps his word. But in the silence and when we are suffering we jump to the conclusion that God does not care and God is not present. Every Christian will walk through seasons where God is silent. This is the nature of faith. Faith is being sure of what we cannot see. Heb. 11:1 Equally it could read when we do not feel God. That is, we have nothing tangible to hang on to. And in these seasons we must walk by faith. Certain that God is present and that God has not left us.

There are a lot of things in the Bible that people quote as promises of God that are not. Quote from Psalms; these are not promises but expressions of worship. Quotes from Proverbs; these are not promises but general truths. Quotes from Old Testament about material blessing but we live in a new covenant where those promises are not made for now but the future. But this promise is for us and is cast iron.

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REFLECTION + DISCUSSION

What are some of the ways you typically experience God with you?

Share a mountain top moment, when you felt God in a powerful way.

How have you reacted in the times when God seemed to be silent or absent?

Share a time when God has been present to you through a person. Did you recognize it for what it was?

If you were conscious of God with you at every moment of the day, what difference do you think it would make to you?

What could you do to be more aware of God with you?



CENTRAL BAPTIST

LOVE GOD : LOVE OTHERS