

Sermon #3

The Presence of God

God is ever-present. He is always here for whoever will receive His goodness and mercy.

God supplies all of our needs;
and He shows us how to be content with what we have,
and how to enjoy all that He has given.

God is meek and humble.

He does not force His way, nor does He force us to love Him.

Today I have a story to tell you: a tale of two couples

A Mexican husband and wife who spoke no English immigrated to the United States because they had heard so many stories of the beautiful land, good job opportunities, quality health care and education for themselves and their future children. Next door to their rented bungalow lived a wise, caring man who greeted them warmly with food, smiles and an offer to help them . He knew several languages, including Spanish, and could translate for them and guide them until they knew their way around.. They accepted the food at the door with customary courtesy, but did not invite him in. After the man left they sat around talking, speculating about why he had brought them the food. Before long they had convinced themselves that he was either crazy or expecting something in return, so they shunned the man..

The couple asked every Mexican immigrant they could find for advice and opinions about how they could realize the American dream. They watched the news and the daytime talk shows, picking up the

general ideas and attitudes. But in spite of tremendous striving, they did not find all the great things others had described to them. Instead, they found prejudice, violence, and poverty. They hated the little bungalow, because they wanted to live in one of the big mansions across town, so they didn't keep it clean or mow the lawn. They were convinced that their neighbors hated them because they were from Mexico, so they never greeted or spoke to them. As their dreams evaporated, their marriage deteriorated into anger and bitterness. After six months, the woman went back to her mother in Mexico and the man became involved in a criminal lifestyle--both telling everyone who would listen how bad everyone and everything is in the United States.

The next couple to move into the bungalow were also Hispanic immigrants. Neither of them knew how to speak English. The wise neighbor greeted them warmly and brought them food just as he had done for the previous residents. The new couple saw right away that there was more food than they could eat, so they invited the kind neighbor to stay for dinner, and also invited the elderly woman who lived on the other side of them. The four of them ate heartily, smiled frequently, and laughed loudly. The wise neighbor was able to translate for everyone. They found that their hearts were in harmony in spite of the language and cultural differences.

Over the next few months, they manicured the lawn, planted flowers, painted the dull oyster-shell walls cheerful colors and put up wallpaper borders in the kitchen of the rented bungalow. Nearly every

evening they spent time with the wise neighbor, learning English and asking him all sorts of questions about the country, the city, the neighborhood, the people and culture. They trusted his wisdom and judgment and followed his advice. Although they tried on many occasions to pay him for his tutoring, he insisted that just seeing them using and benefiting from his investment gave him great joy.

Both had minimum wage jobs at first, but they always had enough for their needs and to share with others. They often marveled at how perfectly the house, yard, and neighborhood fit their needs. They enjoyed helping some of the elderly neighbors with occasional maintenance. They made many friends.

Within a year, both were fluent in English, and they were teaching Spanish to a high school student down the street who was planning to go on a mission to South America. Another year later, the woman gave birth to their first child. Her husband was earning more now, and it was just enough to perfectly cover their needs so that she could be a full time parent.

They eventually bought the little bungalow, added on to it, and raised four healthy, faith-filled children. They both went through the long process of obtaining United States citizenship. Now they are old and fulfilled, still overflowing with grateful memories of the kind, wise neighbor who had given so freely and lovingly of himself to help them find their way in their adopted homeland. Their grandchildren come to

visit and hear stories about how the neighbor helped them in every way and how, without him, they would never have made it.

What happened to the first couple? The woman is now old, and also has grown children and grandchildren by her second and third husbands. They all live in strife and poverty, very bitter about their lives and blaming the Americans for all of their problems. The man spent ten years in an American prison for armed robbery and possession of cocaine; after he was released he killed a man in a botched robbery attempt, and is now serving life in prison without parole. He blames the government for his life of crime.



In the Kingdom of God, we all start out as immigrants,
and we are all greeted by our Teacher, interpreter and friend,
Jesus Christ, who is the way, the truth and the life.

Will you receive and follow Christ,
and be established in the Kingdom of God?
Or, will you shun him and cut you and your children off
from His goodness?

Jesus Christ is the way, and it is a narrow way.
Are you walking in His path?
Jesus Christ is the truth; do you listen to Him and believe Him?
Jesus Christ is the life; are you seeking Him?

Are you aware of the presence of God?
Do you know that He is with you and for you?
Let's look at the **handout** and consider the presence of God:

The Presence of God

God's presence is here, always.

In Him we live and move and have our being.

When I choose to obey God, He makes His home in me.

Sin blinds one to God's presence and deafens one to His voice.

If I choose to continue doing something that I know is not right, and I justify myself rather than humbling myself and asking for His mercy, then I am shutting out God.

Repentance opens blind eyes and deaf ears.

It enables me to realize and be aware of God's presence at that moment.

That's why John baptized people for repentance.

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

Obedience to Christ is the Kingdom of God.

That's why Jesus said that the Kingdom of God is "at hand".

It is in my power, at any moment, to obey Christ.

"Stop, look and listen:

Stop going your own way.

Look at the truth I give you.

Listen to My guidance and counsel.

Then go forward as I lead.

I AM here, now, always with you.

I will open your eyes to see whenever you follow Me.

You must follow by faith, and then you will see.

Leave the past behind. Begin anew in Me today.

Run from your sins and cling to Me for mercy and goodness.

I love you."

“O My people, you who I love: Listen to Me!
Turn to Me and receive the good I have for you!
Stop hurting and killing yourselves!

I, the LORD, love to do good to My people.

I want them to prosper in love and truth.

I enjoy their enjoyment of all that is good.

But I am grieved by those who turn away from My goodness.

I AM sorry to see them suffer and sorrow,
and cause others great sorrow and pain.

I want them to turn to Me so I can heal them,

so I can wipe the tears from their eyes,

so that I can lead them in the paths of righteousness:

love and truth, joy and peace, humility and patience,
healing and fulfillment.

You have all you need to do My will; do not strive for more.

Do what you can with what you have, in a way that benefits others.

And seek to know Me better.

In this will you prosper and be in health.”