

We Are Better Off – John 16:4 - 11

We are approaching the end of the series, looking at the person of, and the work of, the Holy Spirit. Looking at John's account, we have been reading as Jesus has talked about the Holy Spirit, giving us insight on what He shares is important for His disciples to know as Jesus is approaching the crucifixion. Jesus has covered what to expect and what to look forward to when the Helper comes. The Holy Spirit has come to reveal who Jesus is. The Holy Spirit comes so that we would know the love of the Father. When we are filled with the Holy Spirit, we know the peace of God.

Read John 16:4 - 11

Jesus is telling His disciples that He is leaving them. The disciples are grappling with this information: the one that they have followed - left everything for - is leaving them. He is going back to the Father, and leaving them behind. But Jesus doesn't leave it there. Jesus is going, but it is better, because the Holy Spirit will come (**John 16:7**). Jesus is sending Him, so that we can know the presence of God, the Holy Spirit *in us*.

Driven Out From His Presence

Read Genesis 1:1-2, Genesis 3:2, and Genesis 3:24

From the beginning of the Bible, the beginning of creation, we see God in perfect unity. The three persons of the Trinity working together in perfect relationship. Through creation, God created man and woman in His image, in His likeness, to live in His presence. Adam and Eve talked with God and lived in His presence. But man and woman did the one thing God has said not to do, and immediately hid from Him. Sin comes in and man flees from God's presence. God drove man out from His presence, out from the Garden. Because of Sin, God's presence was no longer available.

Q. How can our friends and family attempt to fill the void left by our intended purpose in God's presence?

His Presence Dwelling With Us

Read Exodus 33:15-16

Man's sin in the Garden of Eden didn't take God by surprise. He was not caught of guard. Instead He had chosen a people. The story continues, and God is calling a people to live in His presence. In Exodus, we read of the Israelites who are living with the presence of God. The presence of God is so important that Moses refused to go anywhere, unless the presence of God moved with them.

Different groups have different things that identify them. Different traditions, different behaviours, different histories. How are we distinguished from anything else? For the Israelites, the thing that distinguished them was the presence of God. The presence of God is how they would know the Israelites, and so they would not do anything without the presence of God. As the Old Testament continues, we see a people setting up around the temple. A building where the presence of God dwells with His people. There are stories after stories of God meeting with His people, the Spirit enabling them to follow His purposes. The Israelites were a people who dwelt with God.

Q. How are we identified by our friends and family? How are we distinguished from the world around us?

Q. What impact does the presence of God have on people's view of us? How does this affect what we share?

His Presence Dwelling In us

Read Joel 2:28

Moses had the right idea. The identity of the people of God would be the dwelling of God. However, they had not seen the fulfilment. The dwelling of God had been limited to the tabernacle, to the temple, and with one or two individuals. Joel speaks of a time when the Spirit will be poured out on all people. There is something more coming, where we won't need to come to the temple, and wait outside. Jesus is encouraging His disciples, that there is a restoration. Where man had caused separation between us and God, Jesus was going to the Father, and sending the Spirit to dwell in us, that we become the temple. We become a people that take the presence of God in us - not just carrying it with us, not just having the temple to go to - a people identified by the Spirit of God in us.

Read 1 John 3:24

It's easy to talk about the love of God. It's easy to discuss the peace of God. However, the presence of God is a step further. It can be difficult to meet someone face to face, because there is no-where to hide. Yet we are called into God's presence. We are exposed and He can see it all when we come into His presence - but we do not need to fear, because of all that Jesus has done. Through the work on the cross, our sins have been removed. We have exchanged our sin for the righteousness of Jesus through His death and resurrection. We do not need to worry about facing God, because of what Jesus has done. So, we can be in the presence of God, with the Holy Spirit, the presence of God, dwelling in us.

Q. How can we be tempted to hide from God? How can we remind ourselves to enter boldly into His presence?

When the Spirit comes, He will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgement (**John 16:8**). A life lived in the presence of God looks like Isaiah's encounter with God (**Isa 6:1-7**). We are not perfect, but our sin has been atoned for. The weight of punishment has been paid. His presence lives in us, because we know Jesus' righteousness, and His rule is above the ruler of this world. Jesus has judged, and is seated high above the ruler of this world (**John 16:11**).

Q. How does our response to sin affect our behaviour? How does it change our response to others' actions?

Q. How can the presence of God be seen through what we do? How are we identified by the Holy Spirit?

Read Psalm 84