
Pursuing His Presence

The Fruit of Pursuing His Presence

We've been in this series about pursuing God's presence, and this is our last message.

When everything else is removed, and we seem to have very few options, pursuing God is still an intentional choice!

Where We Belong

It starts with us remembering that we are created in God's image, image bearers who are designed to be in His presence.

We are dwelling-place people – we are temple-people.

Let's look at Jesus' life.

Mark 4:35-41

The Fruit of God's Presence

Jesus is asleep in the storm. You might be thinking it's irrational. But Jesus wasn't in denial, He had to acknowledge the storm in order to rebuke it. This isn't a moment of irresponsibility. It is, in fact, a moment where Jesus was actually inviting the disciples into the same awareness of God's presence, that He had been modelling for them for the entirety of His ministry so far.

This is the object lesson. Is this moment in history our object lesson? What is our response?

But we're not the Son of God.

Paul finds himself in a similar situation towards the end of Acts.

Acts 27:27-44

A bit different, but aware of God's presence in the storm, Paul's life was preserved. Not the glorious rebuking of a storm, but the wisdom and faithfulness of God to direct Paul about what to do. And they were all brought safely to land...

2 Corinthians 6:3-10

The real fruit of God's presence is not the easy life. The reality of the fruit of God's presence in our lives is actually the awareness of God in every situation.

Philippians 4:4-8

Overflow

The reality is that this kind of fruit doesn't appear overnight.

Fruit is a good metaphor – it takes time for good fruit to form and grow.

As believers, the fruit isn't actually what we strive for. Like the one who cultivates a fruit tree, we work at growing a healthy tree, and a healthy tree produces good fruit.

Our fruit isn't the goal, it's the overflow of the relationship we have with Jesus.

"I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing." John 15:5 (ESV)

Why Fruit?

What is fruit for? What is its purpose?

Why do we need to be fruitful?

What does that mean for me every day?

Originally, my landing point was that coming to fuel up on a Sunday and/or a Wednesday night wasn't enough. And it isn't, wasn't, and won't be when we are allowed to do that again.

But, what we are faced with in this season is unheard of for us as a generation alive at this point. What does it mean when I cannot connect with my faith community to get fuelled up?

More than ever, we are connected by the unseen things – by God's presence, His Spirit.

We worship, daily, not out of obligation, but out of the need to be with the one who makes sense of the world when everything else doesn't make sense.

We read the word, because in the Bible, we find the Word of life: Jesus, and truth from Him that we can rest our lives upon.

We tell others, because the hope we have is like a light we set on a stand so that everyone who needs to see can see.

John 16:29-33 (ESV)

Discussion Questions:

1. Have you made the choice to intentionally to pursue God's presence in your life? What did that look like? What changed?

2. What difference does it make to you to know that the scriptural understanding of humanity is that we are designed to be dwelling places for God's presence? What does it mean to you that, as a disciple of Jesus, that you are in reality a dwelling place of God's presence – His Holy Spirit?
3. Jesus slept in the storm, because He knew the Father well enough that Jesus' identity and authority was clear to Him. He could calm it, and He knew His purpose lay beyond it. Is there a gap between Jesus' example and your life in this season of chaos?
4. Paul's experience of a storm and its impact is a little closer, maybe, to some of our own lived experiences over the years, or in this season. What lessons can you personally draw from Acts 27 and Paul's shipwreck experience?
5. What are the lessons God is teaching you now, that you need to recognise and learn in this season, so that fruit will be produced in your life in the years to come?
6. What is the difference in your life when you're motivated by fruit, compared to when you're motivated by relationship?
7. What aspect of your relationship with Jesus is He calling you to work on, invest in, and develop so that you can produce fruit from the overflow?
8. Spend some time in prayer; Jesus (in John's Gospel) reminds us that the Holy Spirit will be with us, so we can be at peace, because Jesus has overcome. Allow this truth to start to minister to your interior state, so that the overflow of this may, in the days and weeks to come, minister to those around you.