

The Lord's Presence With Us

Lord, our prayer is to be continually in Your presence. We say that Your presence is a wonderful, precious thing in our midst. Lord, we do desire to be continually in Your presence. Bless the Lord.

I was just sharing with a brother how wonderful it is the simple things of the Lord. The simple thing this morning that touched me was that He calls each one of us by name; the resurrected Lord calls us by name. What a wonderful thing that is! I just have a few short things to share this morning. For the last two or three months I have been in I and II Peter, and I have been trying to read both books every day. At the same time, we were having meetings on Sunday night about, "Why We So gather." There are some precious things out of I Peter that the Lord really encouraged me with.

Matthew 18:20: "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst." What a great promise!

II Peter 1:4: "He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises."

Surely I think we could all agree that that promise of the Lord to be with us is a great and magnificent and precious promise. I hope you consider it a magnificent promise. Our brother Stephen Kaung said, "Where two or three are gathered together unto His name, there He is in the midst of them." In other words, where His name is honored, His presence is there. "Where His name is honored, His presence is there." C. H. McIntosh said, "If Christ is in our midst, we can count on Him for everything." "If Christ is in our midst we can count on Him for everything." The name of Jesus is all-sufficient for all the needs of the assembly.

Brother Stephen said, "His presence is here." And McIntosh said, "Where His presence is, all the needs of the assembly are met." Brother Stephen said, "Christ is so glorious, it takes the whole body to manifest His glory." Brother McIntosh said, "Our one object is to exalt the name of Jesus."

So I would like to share out of I Peter four simple things we all know that are aspects of the Lord's presence with us. Brothers and sisters, if you get nothing else, just consider how magnificent that promise is, that if we gather in His name He is in our midst. Bless the Lord for that.

There are four ways that Christ is in our midst. First of all, the Holy One is in our midst, secondly, the Shepherd is in our midst, thirdly, the Keeper is in our midst, fourthly, the Guardian is in our midst. There are many more examples in Peter of an expression of the Lord in the midst of His people, but these four things rose up to me as I was reading the book over and over again. The Holy One is in our midst, the Shepherd is in our midst, the Keeper is in our midst, and the Guardian is in our midst. Through these aspects, and more, of Him being in our midst, He supplies everything that we need. So we bless Him for that.

The Holy One is in Our Midst

I Peter 1:14-19: “As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; because it is written, ‘YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY.’ If you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each one’s work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay on earth; knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ.”

First of all, we need to consider that the Holy One is in our midst, and the Holy One in our midst is the Thrice Holy God. On the throne He sits and reigns and He is worshipped continually: “Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God, the Almighty. This engenders in us a spirit of awe that that Holy One of God would presence Himself with His people. He is not less than that Holy One in our midst. He is still Thrice Holy in our midst. And I believe that is why Peter said, “Conduct yourselves in fear (reverential awe) because if the Holy One is in our midst, there is an awe that is upon the assembly. Right after that he mentions, “the precious blood of Christ” because brothers and sisters, the more we know the Holy One in our midst, the more we see the necessity of the blood of the Lamb. If the Holy One is not in our midst, it is okay to think of the Lamb and occasionally worship the Lamb, but we should continually lift up the blood of the Lamb because the Holy One is in our midst. There is a beauty of holiness in our midst. When the Holy One is in our midst, that beauty of holiness is upon us.

Psalm 27:4: “That I may dwell in the house of the Lord to behold the beauty of the Lord.”

Psalm 29:2: “Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.”

Psalm 90:17: “Let the beauty of the Lord be upon us.”

Have you ever thought that as the Holy One is in our midst that there is a beauty of holiness that rests upon the assembly? Gill says, “Holiness is the beauty of God Himself, and it is the beauty of the saints.” Barnes says, “There is a beauty inherent in holiness.” And the holy One in our midst, if He is in our midst, which He is, there is a beauty of holiness that rests upon us, and the church displays that beauty. I will admit to you that I have a hard time with holiness, and that is probably why I share on it because I was raised very conservatively. So when someone would mention holiness to me, my thoughts would immediately go to Pharisaical holiness which is not real holiness but law, ugly hypocrites. However, there is a beauty in holiness that should attract every child of God. There is a beauty of holiness that if the Lord is here, which He is, that beauty should attract all of us all the time.

Tozer said, “We are delivered from God in God, from His awesome holiness that turns us to the Lamb, but the holiness draws us to Him.” In Christendom it seems like holiness is something to be shunned and to be looked down upon, even ridiculed. But the beauty of the Lord, the Holy One in our midst should draw us and attract us. I have often thought since meditating on the beauty that surrounds the very throne of God, all the colors that are mentioned in Scripture, why? And I am beginning to think that that represents the beauty of holiness which radiates from the throne of God. “Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God Almighty.” And above the throne there are

colors and before the throne there is a sea of glass, and even the holy city has its street of translucent gold. There is the beauty of holiness, and may our eyes be open to see that beauty.

The third aspect of holiness is that the holiness of the Holy One should pervade every aspect of the church. Holiness should be apparent and is always present in the assembly of God. These are some examples of how much the holiness of God and the Spirit of holiness is in our midst.

I Peter 1:15: We are to be holy in all of our behavior both in and outside of the assembly.

I Peter 2:5: We are a holy priesthood, not just a priesthood but a holy priesthood.

I Peter 2:9 says, We are a holy nation.

Ephesians 2:21 says, We are a holy temple in the Lord.

Romans 1:2: We have the holy Scriptures.

The working of the Holy Spirit should be apparent everywhere. We have joy in the Holy Spirit. Love is poured out by the Holy Spirit. We have fellowship in the Holy Spirit. We are sealed in the Holy Spirit. We have the fruit of the Spirit of God. We are chosen by the Spirit. We have a holy calling. We have a holy faith. The presence of the Holy One is in our midst, and when He is in our midst, the Lamb of God will continually be lifted up. May the beauty of holiness rest upon us. May the beauty of holiness rest on our individual lives. May the beauty of holiness rest on this assembly. The church is a place of holiness where the Holy Spirit works, abides, and continually moves.

The Good Shepherd

Secondly, the Shepherd is in our midst. I Peter 2:25: "For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd."

John 10:14-16, 27: "I am the good shepherd, and I know My own and My own know Me, even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will hear My voice; and they will become one flock with one shepherd...My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me."

Again the simplicity of the Word and how precious it is. "I know My own." The Shepherd knows His sheep; the Shepherd speaks to His sheep, and the Shepherd guides His sheep. And My own know Me, the Lord says, and the sheep knows the Shepherd. The sheep hears the Shepherd and the sheep follows the Shepherd. He knows us; He loves us; He is sympathetic with us. McClaren said, "My sheep know Me by having a heart harmonized to Him and our spirits in symphony with Him." Barnes says, "Know my sheep means an affectionate regard with love." The good Shepherd speaks of an intimate relationship, a close communion. He knows us; we know Him. He speaks to us; we hear Him. He guides us, and we follow Him. Simple! Yet how many assemblies and how many times have we strayed from that simple thing? The Lord calls and we do not hear. The Lord speaks our name, and you say, "Who are You talking to?" The Lord guides us; He wants to guide us, and we do not follow Him. The good Shepherd speaks of a wonderful close intimate relationship that our Shepherd, who is in our midst, has with us. Many times we

come together for prayer, and we say, "Lord, lead us and guide us." Why? Because He is our good Shepherd. He will speak to us; He will guide us. As the world gets rougher and rougher and more evil and turmoil arises, we have a good Shepherd. Praise the Lord for that!

A Chief Shepherd

We also have a chief Shepherd. I Peter 5:4-6: "And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. You younger men, likewise, be subject to your elders; and all of you clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for God is opposed to the proud, but God gives grace to the humble. Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time."

Christ and He alone is our Chief Shepherd. Chief Shepherd means "numero uno," first place. He is the Boss; He is the Chief Shepherd, and nobody, no person, no group can take the place of the Chief Shepherd. It has to do with order in the flock, and our Chief Shepherd asks two things of all of us; first, clothe yourselves with humility towards one another, and humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God. Brothers and sisters, if we will all recognize that He is our Chief Shepherd, we will have humility towards one another, and we should have humility towards our Lord.

I remember when we were sitting around the circle and talking about these matters. One brother mentioned how important humility is in the assembly of God, and this is so important in the assembly. Sheep should not be going about butting each other, trampling on each other, stomping each other. We should be hearing the Lord, following our good Shepherd and we should be clothed in humility towards each other. That means we always have this garment of humility with each other. Never take it off. Always be humble. And this says, "All of you humble yourselves one to another. When pride, arrogance and selfishness rises up in the sheep, order gets out of whack, and we become our own chief shepherds. Clothe yourselves with the humility of our Lord Jesus. He is our Chief Shepherd.

He is Our Great Shepherd

He is our Great Shepherd. So the Lord is our Good Shepherd; He is our Great Shepherd. Hebrews 13:20: "Now the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, even Jesus our Lord." The Shepherd who is in our midst is a risen Shepherd.

Revelation 7:17: "The Lamb in the center of the throne will be their shepherd, and will guide them to springs of the water of life; and God will wipe every tear from their eyes."

The Shepherd, who is in our midst, is a risen and reigning Shepherd. Why is this important? I do not know if this is correct, but I am going to share it with you. I believe this is a picture of a shepherd king's spirit, what a shepherd king does which is the Great Shepherd. It speaks of His power and His might and what He is in our midst as the Great Shepherd. This is speaking of David who had already been anointed king when he comes before Saul.

I Samuel 17:34-37: "But David said to Saul, 'Your servant was tending his father's sheep. When a lion or a bear came and took a lamb from the flock. I went out after him and attacked

him, and rescued it from his mouth; and when he rose up against me, I seized him by his beard and struck him and killed him. Your servant has killed both the lion and the bear; and this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, since he has taunted the armies of the living God.”

I believe this is the spirit of a shepherd king. How dare anything come against the flock! I will go out and tear the lion and the bear. I will grab them and do hand to hand combat, and I will destroy the enemies of the flock. I believe that is what the Great Shepherd does for us. The Great Shepherd leads us and guides us. But as far as what would attack the flock, He comes, as it were, a terrifying Shepherd. He protects His people with His staff, and I think that is a wonderful, wonderful picture of what the Lord does for us. We are not strong in ourselves; we are strong in His might; it is His power that we are strong in. So bless the Lord for that Shepherd heart of the Lord. I have often wondered in II Peter 2 and in Jude where the Holy Spirit speaks quite angrily to those who come against the flock and those who rise up within the flock and causes all kind of problems. You can see this reigning Shepherd King who says, “One day I will judge that.” He is angry at that, so praise the Lord we have a Shepherd King.

The Protector is in Our Midst

I Peter 1:5: “Who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time”

Our Lord Jesus is in our midst as our Protector. The NASV says, “Protected.” The ESV says, “Guarded.” The NIV says, “Shielded,” and the King James says, “Kept.” This word is a military term. It means “to keep by guarding, to keep under guard as with a garrison, security.” The Lord in our midst is our security, the One who protects us, and He guards us as if the angels, the mighty army of God surrounds us and protects us.” He is the One who is our Protector.

On Wednesday night we sang “A Mighty Fortress is Our God, a bulwark never failing.” Psalm, 18:2 says, “The Lord is my rock and my fortress, my deliverer, my God, my rock, my strength in whom I will trust; He is my high tower.”

Psalm 31:3: “For Thou art my rock and my fortress; therefore for Thy name’s sake lead me and guide me.”

Psalm 71:3: “Be Thou my strong habitation.”

Psalm 91:2: “I will say to the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress, my God in Him will I trust.”

If we put the Lord in our midst and magnify Him, He is the One who will protect us as an assembly. No matter what the government does, no matter what assails us as an assembly, our God, who is in our midst, is our Protector. We are kept, protected by the power of God. There are two or three different words for power, but the one used here is “dynamis” from which we get the word “dynamite.” We are kept by His power, His ability and force. It has to do with an inherent power that God has within Himself and we are protected by that power.

“Now to Him who is able to keep us;” that ability there is the same word, He is able by His power to keep us. Praise the Lord for that! We do not have to worry with things that are greater than us assailing us, personally and as an assembly. We are not, as it were, a weak, sickly flock huddling in a corner somewhere terrified of the enemy without. No! Brothers and sisters, we are protected by the power of God, and anything that comes upon us comes through that protection. You might say, “Well, what about this, and what about that that hits us?” First of all, you and I need to know and understand that His protection surrounds us and garrisons us about all around, and if the Lord allows something to come in it is because He has allowed it. It is not because He is taken unawares or His shield drops; it is not that way. Also in our own lives when tribulation and trouble hit us, it had to come through the Lord first. I do not want to share on suffering, but suffering is mentioned about sixteen times in this book, but first of all you have to see that the Lord in our midst is our Protector. He is your Protector. Everything else follows from that.

He is Our Guardian

He is our Shepherd and He is the Guardian of our souls. A guardian is someone who watches over another’s welfare, who watches over the interest of someone, and here the Lord Jesus is our Guardian. He is watching over our welfare, over our welfare as an assembly. Jesus is the great Superintendent of the church. Jesus is the Superintendent of this assembly. He alone is. I Peter 5:10: “The God of all grace who called you to His eternal glory in Christ will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you.” And you can look up in your concordance all the verses about how He perfects us, how He confirms us, how He strengthens us, how He establishes us. The Lord is our Guardian.

If we will exalt the Lord’s name, His presence is here, and where His presence is there is everything that is needed for the assembly. So praise the Lord, He is our Holy One, He is our Shepherd, He is our good Shepherd, He is the Chief Shepherd, and He is our Great Shepherd. He is our Protector, and He is our Guardian. I know these things are very simple, but if we will look to our Lord Jesus, He will provide everything that we need. Bless the Lord.

Let’s pray:

Lord, I am particularly touched this morning about how You called us by name. Lord, You are such a good Shepherd, that You called each one of us. You called us together by name. Lord, You have our assembly on Your heart, and You called us, You speak to us, and You guide us. Lord, we bless Your name and praise You. What a wonderful God You are! I just bless Your name. Amen.