

## ***The Mother Heart of God***

May 12<sup>th</sup> 2024

Many of you know that a few years ago my beloved dog passed away. It was Jesus, my family, and that dog that got me through our testimony. I remember when we were applying for senior pastor positions all over the country that we got an in person interview in Washington state. We had our two dogs at the time and were flown out for the weekend to interview and preach. We left our dogs with my father-in-law for the weekend. What I forgot was that my dog who was probably ten years old at the time, had gone from home to home before we adopted her. So when I dropped her off I didn't realize that for her it meant I was leaving her. So when we returned for our trip...I will never forget this. The entrance to the house was set up to where you actually had to walk up a set of stairs to get to the main part of the house. I opened the door and at the sound of my voice, my little elderly dog came running. When I picked her up she was literally screaming. My dog was tough, never showed excitement and didn't even play with dog toys. She had a rough life. But when she realized she was not left behind, she came alive like I had never seen before. That dog was absolutely something special and my heart still breaks for her.

I share that story because it was one of the clearest images in my life to describe the feeling of being in right relationship with God in His presence. You and I were created and designed to live and move from the presence of God. The Father in heaven didn't need anything. He was worshipped 24 hours a day, He had perfect loving fellowship – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. But the Father needed an object for His affection so He created humans to have free will and choose to love Him in response. If we ever live outside of the presence of God we will truly find misery, depression, and unfulfillment. I was talking with Pastor Wally after midweek service and I said, "I believe this generation is getting so sick and tired of the show and amusement of Christianity. To remain in sin and separation from the Father you have to go deeper and deeper into sin in order for it to still hold some type of satisfaction or excitement. I believe our current culture and generation has reached the limit. We want the real thing. We need to depths of God's presence.

This is why I am so glad the Lord has directed our church to be a Presence-Driven church. We live to host His presence and minister to God. If we were made to live in His presence than our purpose is to worship, serve, and bless the Lord God Almighty. In our church, we have been talking about God meeting us here. We have talked about God making His dwelling in this house. We say things like "Holy Spirit come," Jesus we welcome your presence." This can be a little confusing because God is omnipresence, meaning He is everywhere all the time. Even among unbelievers, God is present. So what are we talking about? We are talking about the manifest presence of God. To manifest the presence of God means that we are taking the unseen into the seen. We want to tangibly experience and encounter God's presence. That means that even our senses can sense His presence. Hebrews 5 says that the mature in the faith can train their senses to discern good and evil. We are not coming to church to fulfill an obligation and we are not living this Cristian life just to go through the motions or patiently wait until the Lord's return. We are alive to encounter God and make Him known to the spiritual orphans of the world.

Praise God that He sent His only begotten Son in to our world to die for our sins and give us access to the presence of God. It wasn't always that way. In the Old Testament on the day of atonement, the high priest would go into the holy of holies to offer sacrifices for the sin of the nation once a year. The holy of holies was where the manifest presence of God dwelled. If the priest had any kind of sin on his heart, he would immediately die in the presence of God. That's why the priest robe had pomegranate shaped bells on the bottom. If the bells stopped a jiggling, the priest was dead and they would drag him out by the rope that was attached to his ankle. Can you imagine being the next priest up to go in? "Well the one before forgot to confess something and died in the presence of God. You're next...good luck." But praise God we have a high priest in Jesus who made atonement for our sins and set us free. Look what Romans 5:1 says:

***Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, 2 through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God. – Romans 5:1-2 NASB1995***

In Leviticus 10:3 God says, "Those who draw near to Me must regard Me as holy, they must honor Me." Jesus made it possible to enter the presence of God and live freely from His presence. Nothing separates us from God and He will never leave or forsake us, but now because of Jesus we can know God intimately.

The beautiful thing about the presence of God is that not only can we have fellowship with the Creator of the Universe, but everything we will ever need or want can be found in His presence. Psalm 16:11 and other places speak about the fullness of joy and gladness in the presence of God. We have safety, power, peace, and so much more in the presence of God. So many people are hopeless searching the world to try to find what only the presence of God can give. So how do we enter the presence of God? Other than Jesus making a way into the presence of God, the Scriptures are clear that we enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise. Gates are an entrance to either a city or the Temple itself. We enter His presence with thanksgiving. The courts are a place of sacrifice, fellowship, and worship. We go deeper in the presence of God with praise and worship. Look at what Psalm 95 says:

***O come, let us sing for joy to the Lord, Let us shout joyfully to the rock of our salvation. 2 Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving, Let us shout joyfully to Him with psalms. 3 For the Lord is a great God And a great King above all gods, 4 In whose hand are the depths of the earth, The peaks of the mountains are His also. 5 The sea is His, for it was He who made it, And His hands formed the dry land. – Psalm 95:1-5 NASB1995***

If you are ever dry or feeling disconnected from the presence of God, you better start thanking God. You better start praising the name of the Lord. You better get excited and command your soul to bless the Lord. Opening your mouth and letting praise pour out is the fastest way to sense and enter the presence of God. It is a heart connection not a religious program.

Ok pastor Rudy, all this sounds good, but what does it have to do with Mother's Day? Everything! I know in our culture today people are confused about gender and offended at everything. So without sounding non-binary and all that garbage, God is neither male or female. I know we refer to God with masculine phrases like Father, He, Him, etc. But God is not physical like you and I. God is spirit. Look at Jesus' encounter with the woman at the well in John 4:

***23 But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. 24 God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.” – John 4:23-24 NASB1995***

So God is spirit meaning He can have both male and female attributes about Him. When I was praying about this Mother's Day sermon I thought, "I will talk about the mother heart of God." My brain immediately started going and thinking about all the feminine attributes of God and then something dawned on me. As a male, I had been neglecting a good amount of the presence of God because those areas were feminine. Let's be honest. I'm a guy. I don't watch sappy Hallmark movies. I don't cry at the happy ever afters. By not engaging with those emotions automatically means I am not engaging with God in that way. It made me wonder about how many other areas in my life I have neglected God because of my personality and upbringing. We all know that if you had a horrible earthly dad, it makes it tough to relate to your heavenly Father. Our human parents in their earthly failures may have given us a bad perspective of God. But I am here today to say that God is good. Matthew 7:11 says, "If you being evil know how to give good things to your children, how much more your heavenly Father gives good things?" SO we need to experience ALL of God's presence. The masculine and feminine side. It is how we are made. Look at Genesis 1:26:

***26 Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." 27 God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. – Genesis 1:26-27 NASB1995***

My wife, who is female, is made in the image of God. I, being a male, am made in the image of God. We need to learn how to receive from the motherly heart of God. Let me read to you a few verses that describe the mother heart of God:

***"You neglected the Rock who begot you, and forgot the God who gave you birth. – Deuteronomy 32:18 NASB1995***

***13 "As one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you; and you will be comforted in Jerusalem." – Isaiah 66:12-13 NASB1995***

***.34 O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, just as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not have it! 35 Behold, your house is left to you desolate; and I say to***

***you, you will not see Me until the time comes when you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!'" – Luke 13:31-35 NASB1995***

I want to close today with some sad news and a prayer point. I am hoping you will join me in prayer for a family that we know. Last Thursday a former youth student of ours was tragically killed in a motorcycle accident a day before his 20<sup>th</sup> birthday. He knew the Lord, was loved in his community, and it just breaks our hearts. He actually received his motorcycle license the morning he was killed. So when you pray this week please remember the mom Michelle, sister Krysten, and brother Noah as they mourn. I share this sad story on Mother's Day for a reason. Michelle and the kids are going to need supernatural comfort and strength that can only be found in the presence of God. The mother heart of God is a heart of compassion, comfort, and nurturing. This is what the family needs in this time.

When horrible and evil things like this happens, there is a temptation to want to blame God. God how could you let this happen? Many in that community may be angry with God right now. But what we have to remember is that death and sickness is not in the heart of God. It is the ripple effects of a fallen world filled with free will and sin. The bottom line is that Christopher is in heaven with the Lord and will never again suffer on any level. The real work now is those who remain behind. We need to look to God's presence and not run from it. When you sin, go to the presence of God. When you fail, go to the presence of God. When you are hurting, go to the presence of God.

I am thankful today for our moms. I am grateful that they share a part of the heart of God and that the Father has created our moms to be exactly as they are.