

## Today's Sermon

# The Nearness of God

## Psalm 145:18

Pastor/Elder Cliff Peppers, GCBC, July 17, 2022

### I. INTRODUCTION

This morning we are going to continue our study on the attributes of God. Last week Pastor Phil presented to us the GREATNESS OF GOD from Psalm 145:1-7.

We are going to pick up there as we consider another of God's amazing attributes – that being the attribute of the NEAREST OF GOD.

So – if you would please turn there with me in your Bible – to Psalm 145 – where we will be in just a minute.

As Phil pointed out - the superscription [title at the top...] of this Psalm tells us – that this is a Psalm of Praise - of David. This is the last psalm of David in the book of Psalms, and it is fitting that it is one of praise.

As *Martyn Lloyd-Jones* wrote - "Psalm 145 is indeed a monumental praise psalm, a fit summary of all David had learned about God during a long lifetime of following hard after the Almighty."

David writes here – not as a king to his subjects – but as a sinner - amazed by God's grace...a personal testimony to the many – wondrous acts of God and God's unsearchable attributes - that we have been studying these last weeks. [PAUSE]

In v.1 - David begins by extoling – or exalting the Lord as – "my God and King" - because that is where all praise begins.

He is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. He is the creator and sustainer of all life – and our Redeemer and Savior - He alone is worthy of such praise.

This psalm calls on US to praise God as well – for all that He has bestowed UPON US – His grace – His goodness and compassion – for His STEADFAST LOVE.

Because - He is glorious and mighty - righteous and full of kindness.

For all those things and more - Hebrews 13:15 calls us to – "Continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the FRUIT of lips that acknowledge His name."

How can we not offer our own - "SACRIFICE OF PRAISE" to such a MERCIFUL – and loving God? Who – as we read in vv.14-16 - picks us up when we fall – and who - with His open and generous hand – "supplies [our] every need...according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus." [Phil. 4:19] [PAUSE]

In the opening verses David commits Himself to bless and praise the name of God - everyday - forever and ever - and encourages us to praise God along with him.

He says in v.4 that "one generation shall commend [God's] works to another."

And that is happening – right now - as David’s words of praise so long ago – are echoed by OUR generation – in this place this morning - as we too – “declare [His] mighty acts.”

We continue our study today - with v.18 – with a subject that should be NEAR and dear to our hearts – that being - THE NEARNESS OF GOD.

It should be NEAR AND DEAR to our hearts - because WE ARE NEAR AND DEAR TO HIS. [PAUSE]

My friends – the NEARNESS OF GOD - is the GLORY AND HALLMARK of our Christian faith. There is no other religion who can profess a God who is NEAR.

ISLAM CAN'T. To be near to Mohammed – [SLIDE] YOU will have to travel to his grave site in Medina, Saudi Arabia – because – He cannot travel to you.

And - BUDDHISTS – to be near Gautama Buddha [SLIDE – New Delhi] - you must travel to thousands of places around the globe - as tradition has it that he had his cremated remains divided among his followers. [Two teeth and one hair are purported to be in the Lu Mountain Temple in LA].

And even if you did travel to those places – YOU might be somewhat near to THEM – or what’s left of them - but they will not be near to you – they cannot be near to you - BECAUSE THEY ARE DEAD!

However - you can and should travel to the TOMB OF JESUS [SLIDE] at the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem – BUT YOU WILL FIND IT --- EMPTY.

Because - as the angel declared to the women - at the same tomb - on that Resurrection Morning – “I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, for He has [WHAT?] - RISEN...come, see the place where He lay.”

Brothers and sisters – the NEARNESS of God begins with the fact that - we serve a LIVING GOD who – despite our weakness and sin – condescends – every minute of every day – to be NEAR to you and to me - in ways that we cannot fully comprehend - so close that – as the familiar hymn says – “You ask me how I know He lives - He lives within my heart.”

This morning we are going to consider four aspects of the NEARNESS of God.

- The Plan – From Before Time Began
- Nearness of God; People, Place, Presence
- Near through the Blood of Christ
- Near – Now and Forever
- Application

Join me now in the reading of Psalm 145. Please follow along with me as we begin at v.8. THIS IS THE WORD OF OUR LORD.

**PRAYER**

## II. PLAN – FROM THE BEGINNING [SLIDE]

***“The Lord is near to all who call on Him.”*** If we ask ourselves the question - what does it mean that ***“God is near?”*** - I am sure that – with our finite minds – we will never be able to fully define or describe it - much less understand it.

And that is as it should be as – in **v.3** - David describes the **attributes** and **mighty works** of God – as flowing out of His **“UNSEARCHABLE GREATNESS.”**

However – **“UNSEARCHABLE”** does not mean **“UNKNOWABLE.”**

**“Unsearchable”** simply means that God and all He does **transcends or is beyond our ability to comprehend.**

Indeed – God has revealed Himself to us through **His Word** – through **His Attributes** – through **the Son – Jesus Christ** and through the **majesty of His creation** - **SO THAT WE CAN KNOW HIM.**

In fact – **Psalm 66:5** invites us to – ***“Come and see what God has done: He is awesome in His deeds toward the children of man.”***

And that we should do. As *Martyn Lloyd-Jones* wrote – ***“Our supreme need is to know God.”*** And I will add – **even if it takes an eternity** – which it will. **But - what a joyous pursuit!**

As one theologian put it - to ponder the ***“unsearchable greatness of God”*** is a **GLORIOUS – “ENDLESS OCCUPATION.”** [BREAK]

The dictionary definition of **“NEAR”** is - to be **“a short distance away”** – or - **“a short time away in the future”** – in a different context - it also means **“almost.”**

Needless to say – this is **woefully inadequate** when describing the **NEARNESS** of God. ***God is not – ALMOST anything - is He?*** [PAUSE]

When we think of the attributes of God – we – most often think of His **incommunicable attributes**. That is – those attributes that can only be ascribed to God.

As we have discussed before – all His attributes **work together** – **at all times** - in **perfect harmony**.

So - with that – when we think of the **NEARNESS OF GOD** – we naturally think of His **OMNIPRESENCE** that fact that He is **“present everywhere at all times.”**

And – because God is **OMNIPRESENT** – He is – in every sense – **with ALL** people - everywhere.

However – the **NEARNESS** of God – relates most closely with the attribute of God’s - **IMMANENCE.**

The IMMANENCE OF GOD speaks to the fact that – not only is He present at all times – He is intimately involved in every aspect of His creation – ESPECIALLY IN THE LIVES OF HIS PEOPLE.

Of the many passages that speak to the nearness of God – EVERYONE OF THEM – SPEAKS – ONLY - TO HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH HIS PEOPLE.

The Bible never refers to God being “NEAR” to an unbeliever.

Unbelievers cannot rightfully call God – “Father” – they cannot call Jesus - “brother” – they do not share in the spiritual - “fellowship of the Body of Christ.”

His NEARNESS - speaks to His personal and intimate relationship to those - v.18 - “who have called on Him in truth.”

Spurgeon wrote that God is - “Not only near - by His omnipresence, - but to sympathize and favor. He does not leave praying men, and men who confess His name, to battle with the world alone, but He is ever at their side.” [BREAK]

Scripture makes it clear that it was God’s plan – from before time began – to be NEAR to His people.

1 Peter 1:20-21 tells us that – “[Jesus] was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you<sup>21</sup> who through Him are believers in God.”

This and other verses in Scripture refer to the COVENANT OF REDEMPTION – that time in eternity past – when the members of the Trinity covenanted together to accomplish the work of our redemption.

Under this covenant – the Father planned our redemption – through the Son – in order to save His people.

The Son - in turn – WILLINGLY agreed to be sent and to do the work - necessary to redeem the elect – including sacrificing Himself as an atonement for our sins – after which - the Holy Spirit would come - to apply the work of Christ – in the lives of the saints - while sealing us unto salvation [Eph. 1:13-14]. [PAUSE]

### **Why is this important to us today?**

- First – it tells us that God is SOVEREIGN - and sovereign over our salvation.
  - If are a believer in Jesus Christ – you know from Ephesians 1:4 that you were CHOSEN before the foundation of the world - and PREDESTINED to be an adopted son or and daughter through Jesus Christ – ACCORDING TO THE PURPOSE OF HIS WILL – by His GRACE ALONE.
- It also tells us that - because He is SOVEREIGN – because He is IMMANENT – God is providentially guiding every aspect of our lives.

- In **Psalm 139:16** – David wrote – *“In your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me when as yet there was none of them.”* **[rise up/sit down; our every thought; v.7 - “where can I go from your Spirit” – wherever - He “will lead me, right hand will hold me.”]**
- And it **assures us** – that – if God’s plan and purpose is to be always **NEAR** to His people - we can be sure that – *“nothing can separate us from the love of God.”* **[Rom. 8:38-39].**
- And that the day is coming when - *“in the fullness of times”* – **God the Father** will *“unite all things in [Christ]”* – when we will receive our *“eternal inheritance.”*  
**How reassuring and encouraging is that? [BREAK]**

### III. PEOPLE – PLACE – PRESENCE [SLIDE]

**So – HOW IS GOD NEAR?** My OT professor – pointed out to us that God’s plan of redemption - always involves – **HIS PEOPLE** – in a **PLACE** – **experiencing the PRESENCE of God**. And we see that throughout Scripture - beginning in the **Garden**.

First – **God created the PLACE**. He created the heavens and the earth. In almost all of aspects of creation - *“God said”* – and it was so – and it **was good**.

But in **Genesis 2:8** we read that – *“Then the Lord God PLANTED” - as if by hand* - indicating that this was His **special work** for a **very special purpose**.

Then God **created both man and the woman** - and put them in the **Garden** - that **special PLACE** - that He had prepared especially for them.

**He set them apart** from the rest of His creation by creating them **in His own image**.

**Genesis 2:7** tells us that – after forming Adam from the dust of the ground – God *“breathed into his nostrils the breath of life.”*

We don’t see this with the other living creatures – **only with man** – which speaks to **God’s special relationship He desires with His people**.

The late OT scholar and commentator - *Derek Kidner* wrote – *“‘breathed’ is warmly personal, with the face-to-face intimacy of a kiss and the significance that this was an act of giving as well as making – and self-giving at that.”* **[PAUSE]**

With God’s own *“breath of life”* – He gave them an **eternal soul** – and endued them with His **communicable attributes** – which are those attributes that **God shared with man** that are **similar to His own**.

He gave Adam and Eve the **special ability to communicate**. He gave them **emotions** and the capacity **to love each other** – but most importantly – to **COMMUNICATE WITH AND LOVE – HIM** - in **personal and intimate relationship** with Him – as they walked together and communed in **sweet – unbroken fellowship** - in the beauty of the **Garden**. **[PAUSE]**



**[Geo. Bev. Shay – “My God and I go in the field together. We walk and talk as good friends should – and do. We clasp our hands – our voices ring with laughter. My God and I walk through the meadows, hue.” – stylized but in some sense – true]**

**You know the rest of the story.** Despite the idyllic setting in the **Garden of Eden** – with all of **God’s loving care** – and **intimate fellowship** they shared – still – **man rebelled**.

And with that rebellion - **came estrangement** - as God removed them from the Garden – to **face the struggles of a cursed world**.

But even with the fall –as an act of God’s grace - there came the promise of an even **better and more intimate relationship** with Him - through the **“seed of the woman”** – a **promised redeemer** - who would one day – **crush evil and sin** – restoring **unbroken fellowship between God and His PEOPLE**. **[PAUSE]**

So - to that end – in **Genesis 12** we read that the Lord called out a man named **Abram** – changing his name to **Abraham** which means – **“father of multitudes.”**

God sent Abraham on a journey to the land of Canaan where – as we read in **Genesis 15** – God made an **unconditional covenant [means a covenant God would never break]** - with him that promised that – Abraham’s **offspring – his PEOPLE - would be more numerous than the stars**.

And to that - God promised to provide for them specific **PLACE** for his **PEOPLE** to live – rightly called the **PROMISED LAND** – where they would live in His glorious **PRESENCE**.

God Himself summarized His covenant with Abraham this way - **“I will give to you and to your offspring...all the land of Canaan – for an EVERLASTING POSSESSION, and ! WILL BE THEIR GOD.” [PAUSE]**

There was **one small problem** – Abraham’s wife Sarah was barren. So – in a **miraculous act of God** - at the good old age of 90 - Sarah gave birth to Isaac – who **Galatians 4:28** calls – **“the Child of Promise.”**

Incidentally - this same verse calls **all believers** – **“Children of Promise.” [PAUSE]**

Isaac would have son – **Jacob** – whose name – God would change to **“Israel”** – which means – **“he strives with God” (Gen. 32:28)** – from whom **God’s Chosen PEOPLE** would descend.

And Jacob had a son – **Joseph** - whom God would save from the wrath of his brothers by - sending him into slavery in Egypt.

However - as difficult as Joseph’s situation was – **God was always NEAR to Him**.

Four times in **Genesis 39** we are told that **“The Lord was with him”** and **“whatever he did, the Lord made it succeed”** to the point that he became second – only to Pharaoh in Egypt.

God blessed Joseph and his descendants. According to **Exodus 1:7** - **“they multiplied and grew exceedingly strong, so that the land was filled with them.” (Ex. 1:7).**

So great was their number that these **Hebrews** – **as they were known** - became a threat to the Egyptians. And with that – they placed under a great bondage – until – as we read in **Exodus 2:23** – **“The people of Israel groaned because of their slavery and cried out for help.”**

And then we read in **vv.24-25** that – because God is always **NEAR** to His people - **“God HEARD their groaning – and God REMEMBERED His covenant...God SAW the people of Israel – and God KNEW.”**

So, God raised up - in **Moses** – who would – through the miraculous hand of God – lead them out of Egypt – out of bondage - and to the **Promised Land. [PAUSE]**

Let’s stop here briefly to remember what we often read in the Psalms and throughout the Scriptures that – **IN HIS IMMANCE TO HIS PEOPLE** - God **always hears** and **always responds** to **their cries for help and mercy.**

- **Psalm 121** begins – **“In my distress I called to the LORD, and He answered me.”**
- And – **Psalm 35:19** says – **“Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the LORD delivers him out of them all.” [PAUSE]**

**GOD ALWAYS KNOWS - ALWAYS HEARS AND ALWAYS ANSWERS - BECAUSE HE IS ALWAYS NEAR. [PAUSE]**

**You know they rest of this story, too.** Despite God’s great promises and wondrous works – still – they were a **rebellious and stiff-necked people** and yet God never left them.

- He provided manna and quail when there was no food.
- He provided water when there was no water.
- He provided protection from their enemies.
- And personally led them through the wilderness as a - **cloud by day and pillar of fire by night** - so they would not get lost.

And – to keep them as **close to Him** as possible - God not only provided for their **physical needs** – He provided for their **spiritual needs.**

- He gave them **the Law** that **pointed to their sins and their need of salvation.**
- And He gave them priests to represent them in His **PRESENCE** - in the Holy of Holies where sacrifices for atonement for their sin could be offered on the Mercy Seat.

And there – **by His grace** – God granted them **atonement** - with the promise that there was an **even greater sacrifice yet to come** – **a once for all sacrifice** – **a MESSIAH** - who would shed His own blood - not just for the sins of Israel – but for the sins of all His people.

All this prompted Moses to write in **Deuteronomy 4:7-8** – **“What great nation is there that has a God SO NEAR to it as the LORD our God is to us, whenever we call upon Him? <sup>8</sup> And what great nation is there, that has statutes and rules so righteous as all this law that I set before you today?”**

And God – true to His covenants with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Moses – lead them into the **Promised Land** – **HIS PEOPLE** – **IN A PLACE** – **EXPERIENCING THE PRESENCE OF GOD.** [PAUSE]

And to rule them – God rose up a great king – King David – “***a man after God’s own heart***” - and the **author of this Psalm.**

However – as great as David was – God promised His people - an even **GREATER KING** - of an even **GREATER KINGDOM.**

And yet – still they rebelled - until God placed them under **strict and severe discipline** – not out of **hatred for them** – but out of **love for them** - promising in **Jeremiah 31:31** that – “***Behold, the days are coming...when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel...I will put my law [not on stone tablets but...] within them, and I will write it on their hearts.***”

**SUCH IS THE LOVE OF GOD WHO IS ALWAYS NEAR TO HIS PEOPLE.** [BREAK]

#### IV. BROUGHT NEAR BY THE BLOOD OF CHRIST [SLIDE]

The whole of the OT – shows God’s great love for His people – promising them in **Deuteronomy 31** – that **He would never leave them or forsake them.**

And - all of this and so much more pointed to - and culminated in - one climactic moment when the **Covenant of Redemption was realized** - and the **New Covenant was inaugurated.**

As we read in **Galatians 4:4** – “***When the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of woman, born under the law, <sup>5</sup> to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.***”

In His grace and His mercy towards His people - God drew **STILL NEARER** – by sending His only son down to earth – **GOD INCARNATE** – who - “***<sup>7</sup>Emptied Himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. <sup>8</sup> And being found in human form, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.***” [PAUSE]

That first sin ***in the Garden*** - was an open **act of rebellion** - **an affront** - against a **HOLY – RIGHTEOUS GOD.**

And – as a result - the **intimate relationship** man once had once experienced with his loving creator – **was broken.**

**Isaiah 59:2** tells us – “***Your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden His face from you.***”

And with that – man was not only cast out of ***the Garden*** – he was sentenced to an **eternal separation** from God – which is **eternal death.**



**Sin and rebellion - always breed more sin and rebellion** - and that is true for all of us.

And - if left unchecked – as we read in **Ephesians 2** - we would have continued to - **“Live in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and [would be] by nature children of wrath.” [WHAT’S NEXT?]**

**“BUT GOD, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which He loved us, <sup>5</sup> even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by [WHAT?] – GRACE - you have been saved.” [PAUSE]**

That brings us back to the **Covenant of Redemption** – and this all-important word - **“REDEEM.”**

**Titus 2** tells us that – **“<sup>11</sup> The grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people” – that Grace who appeared – is Jesus Christ – “<sup>14</sup> who gave Himself for us to REDEEM us from all lawlessness and to purify for Himself a PEOPLE for His own possession.”**

Friends – **THIS IS THE CHURCH** – **THIS IS YOU AND I** - if we have committed our lives to Jesus Christ.

**1 Peter 2:9** says that we – **THE CHURCH IS A** – **“Chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a PEOPLE for His own possession that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.”**

We are now **A PEOPLE** – **IN A PLACE [the church]** – where we – as the **family of God** - **EXPERIENCE THE PRESENCE OF GOD.** [PAUSE]

To be **“redeemed”** is **more** than having our sins forgiven – although it is certainly that. **“Redeem”** means to **“buy out”** and carries with it the idea of being **“ransomed”** – a price paid to set one free.

**Ephesians 1:7** says – **“In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace.”**

And – **2 Timothy 2:6** tells us that it was - **“The man Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup> who gave Himself as a ransom for all.” [PAUSE]**

On the cross – our sin was **IMPUTED** to Jesus - that is – **OUR SIN** was **CHARGED TO HIS ACCOUNT** - as if it were His. That is the meaning of **2 Corinthians 5:21** – when it says – **“For our sake He [God] made [Jesus] to be sin who knew no sin.”**

**Galatians 3:13** tells us that Christ **redeemed us from the curse of the law** by **becoming a curse for us** – and – as a result - **Romans 8:2** – we have been - **“set free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.”**

Sin no longer has dominion over us – we are no longer slaves to sin – we are now slaves to Christ – **who redeemed us at Calvary.**

And **Romans 3:14** tells us that – by taking our sins on Himself – and subjecting Himself to the full fury of God’s wrath - we were also - **“justified by His grace as a free gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.”** [PAUSE]

And because we have been **justified** – **Romans 5:17** says that we have also received – **“the abundance of grace AND the free gift of righteousness”** – through Jesus Christ. [PAUSE]

The **“free gift of righteousness”** - is so important for us to understand.

It begins with this – to have our sins forgiven on the cross – is **truly an act of grace**. But in and of itself – **it is insufficient to save us**. **Here is why.**

**1 Peter 1:16** God calls on every believer to **“be holy as I am holy.”**

And in **Hebrews 12** we are told that **without holiness – no one can see God.**

If that is not plain enough – Jesus Himself in **Matthew 5** said – **“You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”**

**However - forgiven sinners – although forgiven - are neither perfect nor holy – WE ARE STILL SINNERS**

To **be perfect** requires the **absolute obedience to the law** – which none of us have done – **[Rom. 3:10]** - **“None is righteous – no not one.”**

There was only **one exception** to that rule - and that was Jesus Christ – **“who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.”** [Heb. 4:14]

Jesus is the only one who - by His sinless life - **fulfilled all the righteous requirements of the law.**

So - on the cross – even as **OUR SIN WAS IMPUTED TO HIM** - in what is called the **GREAT EXCHANGE** – Jesus – **IMPUTED HIS OWN RIGHTEOUSNESS** - **to us.**

**THAT IS GRACE UPON GRACE.**

And with that – having been **declared justified by faith** [Rom. 5:1] and having **received the free gift of righteousness in Christ** – we have – **in the sight of God** – **BEEN MADE HOLY** – so that – one day - **WE WILL** – **see** – and **live eternally** with God – **IN ALL HIS GLORY** – **which was His plan from the beginning.**

**Colossians 1:21-22** sums it up this way – **“<sup>21</sup> And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, <sup>22</sup> He has now reconciled in His body of flesh by His death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before Him.”** [PAUSE]

Having been redeemed by the blood of Christ – we are now **“at peace with God,”** [Rom. 5:1] – we now have the **“right to be called the CHILDREN OF GOD,”** [John 1:12] – and we have - **“received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!”** [Rom. 8:15].

And here is the culmination all it all – **Ephesians 2:13** – “<sup>13</sup> *But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.*” **[BREAK]**

## V. NEAR – NOW AND FOREVER

We also need to understand this – that our redemption is not only a matter of **our ETERNAL FUTURE** - it is also **our PRESENT REALITY**.

***How near is God to us as we sit here this morning?*** Just before Calvary – knowing that He would soon ascend to the Father – Jesus promised to send “**a Helper**” who – according to **John 14** would – “**Be with you forever, <sup>17</sup> even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him. You know Him, for He dwells WITH YOU and will be IN YOU.**”

**1 Corinthians 6:19** reminds us that our bodies are not our own – they are the temple of the Holy Spirit that lives within every believer – right now. **That my friends – is as NEAR AS IT GETS! [PAUSE]**

Now – exactly how the Holy Spirit lives within us - we cannot comprehend - but we do know **why He is there**. **Romans 8** tells us that He - “**helps us in our weakness – interceding for us in prayer...according to the will of God.**”

That makes our **communication with God** – **deep** – **intimate** and **effective** – **bringing us even nearer to Him** – **if that were possible**.

And - it is the Holy Spirit that works within us to **move us along in our sanctification** - to **conform us to the image of Christ** – to which we have been **predestined**.

With that - our relationship with Jesus Christ is **so close** – He is **so NEAR** - that believers in Him - are said to be **“in Christ.” [PAUSE]**

In Jesus’ *High Priestly Prayer* to the Father - found in **John 17** – Jesus prayed this – “<sup>22</sup> **The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, <sup>23</sup> I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.**”

And then in **v.24** – we hear the **heart of Jesus our Redeemer** towards you and me – “<sup>24</sup> **Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.”**

**What does it look like to be “in Christ?”** Well – I’m not sure we can fully understand that either – but we do know its result - **2 Corinthians 5:17** – “**Ff anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.**” **[BREAK]**

The remainder of our text is very simple. It tells us that the Lord is **NEAR** - “**to all who call on Him in truth.**”

To “*call on the Lord in truth*” – is simply to come to Him humbly and with a sincere heart - seeking His will, not ours - with trust and belief that He is faithful to hear and answer all who call on Him. **[BREAK]**

## II. CONCLUSION

**So – what do we do with all of this?**

We have seen this morning how God is NEAR to those who believe in faith - and who call out to Him for His grace – mercy – protection – and provision. We have seen that this was His plan from the beginning.

However – we also know that – **God doesn’t always seem to be near – does He?** And that is often when we need Him the most. We would be remiss in not acknowledging that.

David and the other psalmists certainly did. In **Psalm 10:1** – the psalmist writes – “*Why, O Lord, do you stand afar off? Why do you hide Yourself in times of trouble?*”

And in **Psalm 88:14** we hear this lament – “*O Lord, why do you hide your face from me? Afflicted and close to death from my youth up, I suffer your terrors; I am helpless.*”

**So – what do WE do when God seems to be “afar off?”** Well – first – we need to do a little honest soul searching.

**Does God feel distant or absent from you – when – in fact – you are the one who has grown distant from Him?**

Ask yourself these questions:

**\*Do I have any unrepentant sin that I need to confess?\***

**\*Am I doubting or struggling against God’s will for my life?\***

**\*Am I displeased with God because He is saying – no – to me for something I desire?\***

All of these can cause us to feel as if God has abandoned us when in fact – He IS still with you – and calling on you to repent – and to trust and obey Him.

In times like that – your **first responsibility** is to go before the Lord as David did in **Psalm 139:23-24** and ask Him to - “*Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me and lead me in the way everlasting!*” **[PAUSE]**

There are also times in every Christians life when we are just - spiritually dry and struggling through a time of spiritual depression – [times the ancients called “the dark night of the soul”] - those times when – despite all that we do before God - we come up empty and still God seems absent. **What then?**

Well – as the song says – we need to be “*standing on the promises.*” We know from our text this morning - and many others that the Lord will “never leave you nor forsake you.”

Jesus promised you in **John 10:28** – “*He] gave [you] eternal life and [you] will never perish, and no one will snatch [you] out of [His] hand.*” **[PAUSE]**

There is song by the *Imperials* that says it well – **“He didn't bring us this far to leave us - He didn't build His home in us to move away - He didn't lift us up to let us down.”**

**Psalm 145:18** is an emphatic statement that **“The Lord IS near” – not “might be” – not “eventually will be” – or – “is sometimes.”**

God will never **TEXT YOU** – **SMILEY FACE; LOL; PRAYING HANDS** – *from the nearest Starbucks.* - No – **“The Lord IS NEAR.”**

So - **“Call out to Him in truth”** and cling to promises we have here in **Psalm 145:**

- From **v.14** – **“The Lord upholds all who are falling and raises up all who are bowed down.”**
- **V.19** – **“He fulfills the desire of those who fear Him; He also hears their cry and saves them.”**
- And **v.20** **“The Lord preserves all who love Him.”**

If that is you tonight - **replace your troubled thoughts and feelings** with what you know to be true about God from the truth of His word.

**Psalm 34:18** promises that - **“The LORD is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit.”**

Remember that – He is – indeed **IMMANENT** and **SOVEREIGN** over your life – like Israel of old – God **KNOWS** – He **HEARS** – and He will **ANSWER**.

Because of the work of Christ – we know from **Hebrews 4:16** - that we can - **“draw near to the throne of grace - in confidence – that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”**

**Preach these great Scriptures to yourself.** They will give you hope and courage to endure - until God delivers you from your struggles. **[PAUSE]**

And remember that – as we live out our **day to day lives** – in **good times and during times of struggle** – God He draws **NEAR** to us when we practice the **SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES** we talk so often about.

The Lord draws near to us when - WE **READ - STUDY** and **MEDITATE** on His holy inerrant word.

**Deuteronomy 30:14** says – **“The word is very NEAR you. It is in your mouth and in your heart.”**

**When the Bible speaks – God speaks. He attends every word.** As you read His word – know that this is God's personal letter to you – and He will – indeed - put **it in your heart** and **give it purpose.**

God said Himself in **Isaiah 55:11** – **“My word that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.”** **[PAUSE]**



### NEAR TO US WHEN WE PRAY.

It is in prayer that we experience our most intimate fellowship with God as we pour out our hearts to our Savior - and then He pours His heart into ours.

This we can be sure of since - <sup>“18</sup> *The LORD is near to all who call on Him, to all who call on Him in truth.*” **[PAUSE]**

### AND – HE DRAWS NEAR TO US – WHEN WE ASSEMBLE AND WORSHIP TOGETHER AS THE PEOPLE OF GOD – AS HIS CHURCH.

It is here that the Lord works through each one of us to encourage and to be encouraged. To gain strength as we strengthen others. To love and be loved. And to offer corporate praise to God, who alone is worthy of praise. **[PAUSE]**

All that said – friend – if you are here without Christ – God is not only – NOT NEAR to you – He is far distant from you.

Without Christ – you face the overwhelming sin and evil that pervades our world and will devour you without mercy.

You are not promised an eternity in the PRESENCE of a loving God – but rather – an eternity in everlasting torment – away from Him and His goodness.

But – if you turn to Him – and “call out to Him in truth” – He will draw near to you now and for all eternity. **[BREAK]**

Well - let's end our time together with this: we began this morning with the Covenant of Redemption – that time when – before the foundation of the earth - the Trinity purposed and planned our redemption.

We saw how God was always near to His people Israel - throughout their journey – when they were faithful and even when they were rebellious.

And we know from **Romans 11** that He has not abandoned them - that He will – one day – call Israel back to Himself – and will fulfill all His promises to them.

We saw how our loving God – gave His only begotten Son – Jesus – to live the perfect and sinless law – and to die on the cross for our sins – and granting us His righteousness - so that we may be holy and – see God.

And how - Lord established His church at Pentecost - giving us the Holy Spirit to guide us through this life --- sanctifying us in the truth of God's word.

All that – brings us to our original premise - that God's purpose was and is – for His PEOPLE – to be IN A PLACE – EXPERIENCING HIS HOLY AND LOVING PRESENCE – forever.

It *began in the Garden* – *continued in the Promised Land* – *experienced in the church* and *lived out in each one of us - through the Holy Spirit.*

Here it is – *the ULTIMATE CONCLUSION* - when the *Covenant of Redemption* comes to full fruition - *Revelation 21* – *[there will be a PLACE]* - “*Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth...* <sup>2</sup> *And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God,*

*[for the PEOPLE OF GOD]* - *prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.*

*[to EXPERIENCE GOD’S PRESENCE FOR ALL ETERNITY]* - <sup>3</sup> *And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be His people, and God Himself will be with them as their God* <sup>4</sup> *He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.”* –

*MARANATHA – Lord Come Soon - Amen*

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