

## Sermon notes – To know and carry the presence of God – January 2016

### INTRODUCTION

David the great king of Israel knew a lot about God. He wrote some wonderfully descriptive and revealing psalms

In Psalm 139 he says, *“Where can I go from your Spirit or where can I flee from your presence O Lord?”*

He comes to the conclusion that he and you and I cannot escape from the presence of God - ever. If we had the ability to rise to heaven or to the depths of hell or take the wings of the dawn – nowhere would we escape from God’s presence.

God is everywhere – but not all people see and recognize Him as being anywhere let alone everywhere.

To know God’s presence is both a joy and a responsibility

Rob has asked me to share some thoughts on **“To know and carry the presence of God”**

### WHAT DOES GOD LOOK LIKE AND HOW DOES HE PRESENT HIMSELF?

It is very difficult to answer this question with a full description because most of the references we have in the Bible are at best an attempt to define an eternal glorious being the likes of which we have not seen on the earth.

**God is an eternal being; a holy and awesome entity; a mysterious and all powerful creator; a glorious, beautiful and majestic person....**

He is all of these things and much more but then we begin to run out of words on how best to describe God

But we are not alone in this matter. Ezekiel, Isaiah, the Apostle John, the writer of the Book of Kings who was describing Elijah’s departure, and many others also had great difficulty in recording what they had seen in dreams and visions and encounters with God.

Those who met God face to face fell at the brightness of His appearing.

**Read Ezekiel Chapter 1**

Moses also spoke **“face to face”** with God and he asked if he could see God fully but God had to hide him in the cleft of the rock as He passed by and would only let Moses see His leaving. God gave Moses a wonderful promise to reward his faithfulness. He said, *“My presence shall go with you, and I will give you rest”*

Isaiah in chapter 6 said, *“I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple.”*

What effect did this have on Isaiah? *“Woe is me for I am ruined!”* (Verse 5)

Isaiah could not stay and abide in God’s presence because good and righteous as he was, he was nonetheless inferior, dirty and unclean.

In chapter 64 v 6 he goes on to say, *“All our righteous deeds are as filthy rags”*

Whilst aspects of God’s supreme character and nature are hidden from us at the moment, our best way of understanding what God looks like is to look at Jesus who is God.

**God is a mystery but He is revealed to us through the person of Jesus Christ.**

*“Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”* (Phil Ch 2)

You should be shouting Amen there!

Jesus is a very powerful being and if you know Him, this experience is life changing, transformative and will lead you to share in His eternal nature.

We needn’t get too hung up about not fully grasping what God looks like now. We have the whole of eternity stretching before us to get to know this wonderful God.

We are all going to be changed, *in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye...*

The Bible tells us that, **when we see Him, we will be like Him.**

*“Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.”* (1 John 3 v 2 – 3)

And this same mysterious God still to be fully revealed to us is the same God who will come and spend eternity with us in that eternal state when heaven comes to earth and the Bride and the Bridegroom’s marriage is fully consummated!

So that is a very quick and speedy explanation of God’s nature and presence but the question I would like us to think about now is, *“How can I carry His presence in my life?”*

### **BEING A CARRIER OF GOD’S PRESENCE**

Everyone here lives in either a house or a flat.

If I was to ask you what you want as the best for your house or flat you might say things like...*“Roomy, airy, light, warm, rainproof, not draughty, pleasant view, etc...”*

Some less fortunate people live on the streets as homeless either through dire circumstances or through poor lifestyle choices.

When the stores close up for the night and put their cardboard rubbish out to be collected early the next morning, I have watched some homeless people seek out the biggest boxes or pieces of cardboard to stick in the shop doorway where they will build their home for the night.

The question I want to ask is *“what sort of spiritual house do you build for yourself?”*

This is very important because the next part of our understanding about the presence of God is mind blowing!

**Whilst God’s presence is everywhere, He also lives in us through the presence of the Holy Spirit within us.**

Paul tells us that our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit and Jesus also said, *“I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.”* (John 14 v 16 – 18)

## So God lives in us! Amazing, and very challenging.

### But what does your spiritual house look like?

An understanding of the presence of God is shaped and defined by His character and nature.

**God is Love** – is that what your spiritual house is full of? Or does it reflect the opposite view to how the children of the Kingdom should act? The devil cannot exercise love. He is puffed up with his own self importance. He is full of hatred and bitterness and he loves not one thing or one person in the whole of God's amazing created universe. Is your house one of selfishness, arrogance or pride? Choose to make it a house of love

**God is full of compassion** – We are all included in the parable of the Good Samaritan. We like to believe that we would always help those who are bruised and battered. But is that so? Are our hearts like the heart of Jesus? Do we have that incredible ability to love those who society has spurned or those who have chosen a foolish and reckless lifestyle that leads to a destructive outcome? Let's not deceive ourselves because we will all be tested on this. Be the Good Samaritan rather than those who looked away or walked on the opposite side of the road.

**God is righteous** – We learnt last month that when God says he wants a righteous people it simply means those who do the **"right thing"**. Is your spiritual house one in which you always make the wise and Godly choices and do the right thing? You will know when you are doing the right thing because the Holy Spirit who lives in you will be your witness. When God told Moses to go to Pharaoh to speak to him, Moses said what shall I use? God said, **"What is in your hand?"** What is in your hand to do right? You and I have the power of choice and we can make our spiritual homes fortresses of righteousness where the very power and presence of God dwells.

**God is holy** – the devil would have us build a house that is flimsy and slipshod. A make-shift dwelling that isn't really peaceful and beautiful. The devil doesn't know beauty and serenity but God is surrounded by the beauty of holiness.

**Holiness means the absence of sin.** 1 Peter 1 v 13 – 16 says, ***"Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. 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 behaviour; because it is written, "YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY."***

Don't stay in the shallows or the backwaters (as described in Ezekiel Ch 47).  
Immerse yourself fully in the river of God

## CONCLUSION

You and I are carriers of His presence. Learn to steward the good things God has given to each of us.

Practice how to cultivate His presence. Flee from sin and worldliness and then His presence will abide and grow stronger and God's presence will shine through you and people will say, *"What is it that's different about you"*

And you will be able to answer, *"It's nothing to do with me. It's all a result of what God has done for me and in me"*

God will give us the good we don't merit or deserve - that's defined as GRACE

God will withhold all of the bad that we do deserve through our sinfulness – that's defined as MERCY

But God will execute JUDGEMENT one day and that's defined as JUSTICE

*Grace is the soil in which all the fruits of the Spirit grow*

"Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need". (Hebrews 4 v 16)

I have written a prayer that I would like us all to say together as we stand before God

*Lord God, you are high and lifted up and there is none to compare with you.*

*You are an amazing, awesome God and I lift my voice in praise to acknowledge that I am your child and am kept in your power.*

*Thank you that you have come to live in me.*

*Help me understand your presence more deeply, and teach me to rest in your presence every day.*

*Live in me more and more every day.*

*Where I am weak strengthen me; where I am cold and indifferent please change me; and when I feel like straying from your presence please arrest me.*

*Amen*