Good morning, Family. This morning, we continue our series on the promises of God. Throughout the pages of Scripture, we are given amazing promises, promises based on God’s character and faithfulness. These promises of God help us to learn to allow the full measure of the nature of God to become the pattern of our character. Look with me at our Gospel reading to see another incredible promise:

18 Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” -- Matthew 28:18-20

Take note: God in the person of Jesus Christ promises, “I am with you always”!

In this passage, known universally as the Great Commission, we are blessed in our daily lives, in our pain, in our mundane existence that our God is our Emmanuel. He is *GOD WITH US*. And He has kept this promise. Pause for a moment to think about this biblical truth. In the Garden, in the Tabernacle, in the Temple, at Pentecost, at the coming of the New Jerusalem, He is with us because He is faithful. In Exodus 33:13-14, God promises His presence: “13 If you are pleased with me [says Moses], teach me your ways so I may know you and continue to find favor with you. Remember that this nation is your people.”14 The Lord replied, “My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.”

Family, listen. God’s presence is fundamental to the identity of who we are. He promises His presence to the glory of His name. For us to know Him as we journey through life happens because of union with Christ. Paul recognizes this need and commits to culturing a knowledge of Him when he writes, “I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death” (Philippians 3:10). John Piper has said, “Union with Christ is the center of our salvation and our sanctification and central to all of our deepest joys of life.” Christ wants us to know Him, to cultivate an awareness of His presence. Church, within the grip of salvation, you have the author of the universe on your side! He is *for* you!

It is important to say that His presence is not elusive for the believer. But the believer needs to want His presence, to seek Him and to pursue Holiness, all to adopt an awe of Him or to renew the awe of Him that you once had. Moreover, wanting Him and pursuing Him ensures HIS protection, HIS provision, HIS peace, and His power. C. S. Lewis has written, “Relying on God has to begin again every day as if nothing yet have been done.” This daily renewal means spending time in His presence, time essential to the journey. We are to be attentive to Him and He is there for us to appreciate; as David writes in Psalm 139, “**7**Where can I go from your Spirit?/ Where can I flee from your presence?/ **8**If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.” Family, often we find ourselves feeling like God is absent because we have spent more time focusing on our situations than on seeking and seeing Him. We allow life to produce in us an over-crowded heart and mind, pushing out the peace of God. The psalmist acknowledges that the presence of God is *everywhere.* We need only to spend time seeing Him. Have you done that lately? Have you recognized His nearness to you, believer?

C. S. Lewis has also written, “We may ignore, but we can nowhere evade the presence of God. The world is crowded with Him. He walks everywhere incognito.” And the “incognito” is not hard to penetrate. The real labor is to remember to attend, in fact, to come awake, and still more, to remain awake. Has each of you, my family, remembered to attend to God’s presence? Are you awake to Him? Family, listen! The Lord God is aware of your situation! He knows of your heartbreak, your anxiety, your anger, your struggles with sin, your need for repentance. He knows and is concerned about whatever you are going through (\*Psalm 145:17-20).

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\*Psalm 145:17-20

17 The Lord is righteous in all his ways

and faithful in all he does.

18 The Lord is near to all who call on him,

to all who call on him in truth.

19 He fulfills the desires of those who fear him;

he hears their cry and saves them.

20 The Lord watches over all who love him,

but all the wicked he will destroy.

Are you cultivating this awareness of His presence? In his gospel, John affirms God’s divine, glorious presence: “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth” (1:14).

And before He ascended to His Father, He promises to send a divine companion, which He does--the Holy Spirit that comes in the Book of Acts. This Holy advocates for all those who believe, evidence of the availability of God.

Know, Family, that the continual pursuit of God’s presence will lead you into a revelation of Christ’s glory. Being distracted by an over-crowded mind and heart, The story of Mary and Martha in Luke 10:38-42 illustrates our choice to attend to God’s presence. Martha spends her time fussing with details of hospitality while Mary sits at Jesus’ feet, focused on Him. When Martha challenges Him to chastise Mary for not helping in the kitchen duties, Christ answers, “‘Martha, Martha,’ the Lord answered, ‘you are worried and upset about many things, but few things are needed—or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her’”(41-42). Our busyness, worry, even with things that are in themselves good, can cause a diminished awareness of God’s presence. There is reason we are instructed to “Be still and know that I am God.” This awareness, this attending to God, is a choice. God’s presence is not dependent upon us. He is *always* present. But we need to be awakened to Him in all things, finding comfort and empowerment in Him. We cannot be satisfied with a periodic awareness but seek constantly a realization of Him. His presence is a gift. He shows Himself not just in the spectacular moments of life but also in the mundane. God is actively within our midst; therefore, let us obey, let us be comforted, and let our minds and hearts be at peace—because we choose to attend to Him. Like Mary, we choose the good part, and with the choice, we may follow Him more fully and faithfully. So, here’s the question: Have you been recognizing His presence? Is His presence fundamental to the identity of you as believer? Have you experienced the fullness of joy given to every believer who chooses to attend to His presence? Do you have His joy? Pursue Him as you pursue Holiness. What, you need to ask, hinders you from paying full attention to God?

Passages in support of this sermon:

Psalm 145:17-20

17 The Lord is righteous in all his ways

and faithful in all he does.

18 The Lord is near to all who call on him,

to all who call on him in truth.

19 He fulfills the desires of those who fear him;

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but all the wicked he will destroy.

Matthew 28:18-20

18 Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

Luke 10:38-42

38 As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. 39 She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord’s feet listening to what he said. 40 But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, “Lord, don’t you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!”

41 “Martha, Martha,” the Lord answered, “you are worried and upset about many things, 42 but few things are needed—or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.”