

October 2, 2016 “God Present With Us” 1 Corinthians 3:16-21

There is no more significant teaching in the whole of the Bible than the theme which we touch upon this morning; namely, that God is present with us. Further, it is not a matter of subscribing to the teaching of a single text that proves that God is present with us. A clear headed reading of the Bible will reveal to anyone who is clear headed that from cover to cover, the Bible makes this point...I am quoting from the concluding verse of Psalm 46... “The Lord Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.”(Psalm 46:11) and yes, there may indeed be a theme here, worthy of series in the future!

I say there is no more significant teaching in the Bible than this theme, because it is the bedrock upon which rests the assurance that God is a saving God, a redeeming God, One who gives new life through faith in Jesus Christ, crucified, dead and buried and risen the 3<sup>rd</sup> day. It is in God's very nature to be in relationship with us. And it is also in HIS very nature not to accept the fact that we have through our sinful ways inevitably reduced our bodies to the dust out of which were created. He wants us to live. To live with HIM. To be eternally alive. Because HE wants to be with us and to have us to be with HIM.

In Paul's 1<sup>st</sup> letter to the Christians in Corinth he teaches us something we need to hear and to hear again in every generation. “Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple?” How strange is human nature. Two thousand years ago we learned that God sent HIS Son into the world to redeem us. When Jesus ascended into heaven, HE promised to send the Comforter, the Holy Spirit of God into our midst and into us that we might have all the necessary resources to serve God in a fallen world. The temple in

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Jerusalem is thus put in its proper place, and perspective. And here in the 21<sup>st</sup> century we are tempted to so value our church buildings...which the early church did not have by the way...we are so tempted to value our church buildings as to presume they are temple-like, when they are just man made buildings in which we gather to worship and praise and serve the living GOD.

If you are going to talk about a holy place, and reverence it, talk about yourself as a person with a body, and as a person who believes in God, one God, who is Father and Son and Holy Spirit. “Do you not know that you yourselves are God's temple?” Which means that God is with us. Which means that God has chosen not metaphorically alone, but really and factually to dwell in our hearts and minds, body and soul. God present with us!

And if we did not get it the first time, Paul says it another way immediately in the continuing text of verse 16 of 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 3. “Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple, and that God's Spirit lives in you?” That verse presents us with a question. It is a question which we are invited to affirm...Yes. Yes I know that I and you, ourselves are God's temple. Yes I know that God's Spirit lives in me and also lives in you.” I ask you, could it be said any plainer? God is real. And God is present with us, dwelling inside us, in spite of all our fallenness.

Remember this. This truth does not mean that we have achieved perfection. It does not mean that we no longer sin and err. Just as when we were yet sinners Christ died for us, being human and therefore sinful still, God is with us and in us, as His redeemed and believing children. And I can almost hear immediately someone rising to object...but I'm not so sure I do believe. I have doubts. I

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waver. I have so many questions and there are so many aspects of this faith thing...I just do not understand or understand fully. Warts and all, with all the continuing imperfections of people who are in the world and affected by the world, you are still the temple of God. His Spirit, the Holy Spirit of God and His Son Jesus, lives in you. In you! And me! And the person beside you in the pew, and across the aisle! Anyone who in a faltering voice has dared to say...I believe.

This is so right to be talking about God being present with us, on Communion Sunday and of all Communion Sundays, World Wide Communion Sunday. For all the things that make the folk of one denomination different from the folk of another denomination...we have this in common. We anticipate and we celebrate that God is with us. And we not only celebrate that reality in light of the teaching of Holy Scripture, we do so as we break bread together, and drink the wine (grape juice in

our case). We do this in remembrance of Jesus, the Son of the living God, who with the Father has poured out the Holy Spirit into the midst of us, and dwells not just among us but in us.

This is the lasting bond of Christian unity. Not a man created organizational thing, but the real thing, real Christian unity, the recognition by the very amount of faith we have that God is present with us, the God of Jacob being our fortress as we live our lives in an uncertain world in uncertain times. As we take the bread and the wine, the elements of the sacrament, we praise the God who is present, and has been present, and will be present with us no matter what comes or what occurs. Faith experiences the reality of peace in the presence of our Creator, who is our Redeemer, who is our Friend.

At the Lord's Table, something remarkable occurs. The

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moment arrives as we handle the bread and taste the essence of the grape, where we experience, the real presence of our Lord Jesus Christ. Not because the bread becomes flesh, or the wine becomes actual blood, but because God is here...with us and in us. The Holy Spirit of God achieves this by dwelling in His temple. You. Me. And our brothers and sisters in this place, and in all the other churches where gatherings of believers are doing the same. And if they are not doing it today they will do it shortly, next week or the week after.

It should not come as a surprise that Paul would say to the believers in Corinth, "If any of you thinks he is wise by the standards of this age, he should become a fool so that he may become wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness in God's sight...you are of Christ. And Christ is of God." We are in an amazing place. At the table of the Lord. God is present because He chooses to be with us. He feeds our faith because He chooses to be in us, going through everything we go through with us...first hand.

I pray the sacrament will be a blessing to you. I pray that at this table you will make the same discovery disciples of Jesus have been making since the time of the upper room following the crucifixion and burial and resurrection of Jesus. God is with you. And in you. The Lord Almighty is with us.

Let us pray;

O God our Father we give thanks for the encouragement we may have in the fellowship with other believers. O God our Saviour, we give thanks that our sins shall not condemn us, because we believe you died and rose to give new life to all who believe and even to us. O God, Holy Spirit, remind us when our memories fail us, when fear almost takes us over, that you are here where we are,

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in our hearts, minds, souls, and bodies. Lead us through time to eternity even as we cherish the gospel. Amen.