

SMALL TALK

1. If you set your imagination free to picture something very big that would honor God, what can you imagine?

VIEWPOINT

2. **READ Ephesians 3:14-21.** Which words or phrases grab your attention? Why?
3. What is the basis of Paul's praying that informs and guides his imagination and what he asks for in prayer?
 - "for this reason I kneel". (3:14) What reason?
 - The basis of Paul's prayer is God's will. What is God's will that he prays about in 3:16? 3:17? 18-19?
 - Can you show the progression of what he prays for?... first this (16), then this (17), then this (17-19) till finally this (last phrase of 3:19)
4. What kind of results was Paul imagining and asking for?

GETTING PERSONAL

5. Are your prayers big enough? What might enlarge them (see 3:18)?
 - We need to get a larger view of God's love, and experience it so well, we can't help but want to help other experience that as well.
 - What can you do to "comprehend" the length, width, height, and depth of of God's love?
 - We can count the number of seeds in an apple, but God can see how many apples are in a seed. Can you imagine planting more seeds? How so?

6. What is one big prayer we can join you in praying?

PRACTICE!

7. One of our life practices is, **Engage Missionally**. How will you practice this one this week?

May 23, 2021

His Presence--(Week 5) The Time Is Now!

I thought 1978 was a pretty good year. It was the year I graduated from High School, and yet in 1978 Billy Graham wrote this.

...we face a dark time in the history of God's people. In spite of some encouraging signs, the forces of evil seem to be gathering for a colossal assault on the work of God in the world. Satan has unleashed his power in a way perhaps unparalleled in the history of the Christian Church. If ever there was a time we needed renewal, it is now.

Billy Graham, p. 318 *"The Holy Spirit"*, 1978.

To give perspective and to motivate believers, he wrote about the 1800s and one of the great awakenings in America. Then he wrote:

In the midst of the vast problems which face our world, Christians are strangely silent and powerless, almost overwhelmed by the tides of secularism.

Billy Graham, p. 316, *"The Holy Spirit"*, 1978.

Uh!... *"Houston, we have a problem!"*

43 years later, my hair is white, I've had more experiences, my vantage point is more informed: Do you know what I think? I think the darkness in 2021 is a greater crisis than Billy Graham saw in 1978. But here's the good news. With a greater crisis, comes a greater opportunity!

I. DIAGNOSIS

Jesus' diagnosis: the *"Salt has lost its saltiness!"*

Matthew 5:13 (NIV) *"You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot."*

In Jesus' world one of the uses of salt was to preserve things. Salt keeps a decaying World from further corruption. Why is our world corrupting further since 1978? According to Jesus, the "Salt has lost its saltiness!"

Jesus does not lay the blame on the unbelieving sinners. Sinners are dead already, and dead things decay. That is the very nature of dead things. But that is not our nature. Jesus lays the blame on those who believe, but their lives don't reflect it!

Have you "thrown out" Jesus' words, "thrown out"? (see the verse) Some theologies do, and the warning no longer serves as a warning! Let that sink in. The strong warning is intended to move us to the remedy!!!

II. **REMEDY**

Jesus' REMEDY put one way: "*You are the salt of the earth*" (5:13),
Jesus' REMEDY put another way:

Matthew 5:14 (CSB) "You are the light of the world. A city situated on a hill cannot be hidden.

Good news! This is Jesus' vision for your life. This is Jesus' will for your life.

PAUSE--The Time IS NOW: **Do you agree with his vision for your life?** Do you want his vision for your life? Do you want your life to shine brighter than its shining right now? Tell him so. And ask him for his help. You cannot shine on your own.

When Jesus said, You are the light of the world. That is more than information, that is inspiration. **YOU WILL SHINE.**

REMEMBER MOSES: When Moses came off the mountain in God's presence, his face literally shined. Even the *veiled* glory of God transferred onto Moses' face—Kind of a freaky picture, but it is also inspiring.

HOW DOES ONE SHINE?

There was another scene like this that was bigger and better. It was prophesied in Deuteronomy that there would come later in history a prophet that would be like Moses.

After many more prophecies, He arrived. He invited 3 of his disciples to another mountain, the mount of transfiguration. We call it that because something very otherworldly happened there. Jesus' face shone as bright as the sun. His whole being shined, even his clothing! Then suddenly Moses and Elijah appeared and spoke with Jesus. Then a bright glory cloud enveloped them. This frightened Peter, James, and John. Then a voice jolts them to attention: *"This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased, ... LISTEN TO HIM!"* **Note to self:** Listening to Jesus is more important than listening to MOSES or ELIJAH! Pay attention!!!

Years later, when John was an old man, after pondering this experience for years, he pens some words with inspiration from the Holy Spirit revealing the importance of Jesus:

John 1:18 (CSB) No one has ever seen God. [Even Moses only saw God's veiled glory, "after God's presence protected him and passed by. However...] *The one and only Son, who is himself God and is at the Father's side—he has revealed him.* [not only has Jesus seen him face to face, he himself is the one and only Son, who is himself God.]

2 Corinthians 4:6 (CSB) For God who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of God's glory in the face of Jesus Christ.

If you want to know God personally, look into the face of Jesus!

1 Chronicles 16:11 (ESV) Seek the Lord and his strength; seek his presence continually! [CSB & NIV Seek his FACE always]

A few SURPRISES from our theme verse:

1. 1 Chronicles 16:11 and Psalm 105:4 are identical. Compare 1 Chronicles 16 with Psalm 105, and you realize this song, WRITTEN by David when they brought the ark back into the Tabernacle, made it into the Jewish hymnal.
2. Remember how “The Place of God’s presence” (week 1) SHIFTED? From temporary tabernacle... to a more permanent (temple), then to a more personal...and permanent temple (Jesus), then brought more intimately to us (the Holy Spirit IN US).
3. **We can seek God’s presence more personally and intimately than DAVID** or any Old Testament worshiper. We can look into the face of Jesus! His character, and attributes, up close and personal in His Word.

This is more intimate and personal than looking at a face.

- *(John 15:5) “The one who remains in me and I in him produces much fruit, because you can do nothing without me”.*
- *(Colossians 1:27) “Christ in you, the hope of glory”.*

PAUSE--The Time IS NOW: Write it down. **John 15. Colossians**

1. Read it. Re-read it. Spend time looking into the face of Jesus. Get to know Jesus, get to know God!

PERSONAL STORY: I recall a turning point for me, about 47 years ago, 1975 looking into the face of Jesus for the first time personally. How? On a couch in the church's Youth Room reading John 11 and personally looking into the face of Jesus. A light turned on in my heart! The eyes of my heart were enlightened. And I wanted more!

- **DEVOTE DAILY:** If you are *not* seeking Christ’s face continually, your life will go dark!
- *Don’t be deceived: God is not mocked. For whatever a person sows he will also reap... Galatians 6:7*

Remember, If you are not filled with the Spirit,

- The problem is not that God isn’t filling you.

- The problem is that you are filled with something else.

***Romans 13:11–12 (CSB)** ...since you know the time, it is already the hour for you to wake up...so let us discard the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.*

PAUSE--The Time IS NOW: write something down. What do you need to discard? *Holy Spirit, show us what we are filled with that needs to be displaced by you. What do I need to discard, so that I can say YES to you!*

Confess it. Then Seek His Face.

III. **RESULTS**

***John 15:11 (CSB)** “I have told you these things so that my joy may be in you and your joy may be complete.*

- The Joy, Jesus calls “My Joy” is not found in the cul de sac of self.
- Joy is amped when the Holy Spirit shines through you and blesses another person. Amped joy is larger and more impressive than what I experienced in the youth room that day--that was just a starting point.

IV. **IMAGINE**

***Ephesians 3:20–21 (NIV)** Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, ²¹ to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.*

PAUSE--The Time IS NOW: Imagine more, and ask for more of what Jesus wants to do through you!

THEME VERSE FINALE!

***1 Chronicles 16:11 (ESV)** Seek the Lord and his strength; seek his presence continually!*