

## God with Us Psalm 23

Jesus came into this world as “*Immanuel, ‘God with us.’*” So, it matters to God if He is with us – Having a relationship with God is the most important relationship of all. When God is with us, we have His favor and blessing. If God is absent in our lives, we are spiritually alone and without hope. For this reason, I want God to be a part of my life – I want to cling to Him and like Jesus I want to do the things that are pleasing to Him (**Jn. 8:29**).

What happens when God is with us? Does it really make a difference? Let’s consider Noah. In the days of Noah, the Lord “*saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. The Lord was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart.*” God determined to blot out man, but “*Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord*” (**Gen. 6:8**). Noah and his family, eight souls, were saved; but the rest of the people on earth perished in the flood – *Did it make a difference that God was with Noah?*

Even though Joseph’s older brothers hated him and sold him into slavery, God took care of him. **Gen. 39:2-3** says, “*The LORD was with Joseph, and he became a successful man, and he was in the house of his Egyptian master. His master saw that the LORD was with him and that the LORD caused all that he did to succeed in his hands.*” And in **Acts 7:9-10** we read, “*And the patriarchs, jealous of Joseph, sold him into Egypt; but God was with him and rescued him out of all his afflictions and gave him favor and wisdom before Pharaoh, king of Egypt, who made him ruler over Egypt and over all his household.*” It also seemed to matter that God was in the life of Joseph.

In later years, God was with the judges after Israel had taken the land of Canaan. **Judges 2:18** says, “*Whenever the LORD raised up judges for them, the LORD was with the judge, and he saved them from the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge. For the LORD was moved to pity by their groaning because of those who afflicted and oppressed them.*”

David was a man after God’s own heart. And though he suffered through many trials, the Bible still tells us of him, “*And David had success in all his undertakings, for the LORD was with him*” (**1 Sam. 18:14**). **2 Sam. 5:10** says, “*And David became greater and greater, for the LORD, the God of hosts, was with him.*” When God is with us, He blesses us and helps us through our struggles and challenges.

King Hezekiah “*did right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his father David had done.*” And Hezekiah “*clung to the Lord; he did not depart from following Him, but kept his commandments.*” As a result, **2 Kings 18:7-8** says, “*And the LORD was with him; wherever he went out, he prospered. He rebelled against the king of Assyria and would not serve him. He struck down the Philistines as far as Gaza and its territory, from watchtower to fortified city.*” God blessed Hezekiah, because Hezekiah clung to the Lord and kept His commandments.

The Lord God said to Israel in **Isa. 41:10**, “*fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right*

*hand.”* When we cling to God, He clings to us. **James 4:7-8** says, ***“Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you.”***

*When God is with us, this doesn't mean that we will never suffer or be tempted.* We all face trails, heartaches, and difficulties. And anyone who has ever read the stories of Joseph, David, Hezekiah or Job knows that their lives were not always easy. What God being **“with us”** means is that we are never alone in our temptations, struggles or suffering. *We look to God for our strength, comfort and hope.*

What happens when God's people forsake Him and no longer have his blessing? Here are a few examples, do you remember **Samson**? He just had to marry a woman outside of the Jewish faith – which by the way was against God's Law in the O.T. Now she might have been beautiful, but she had no loyalty to Samson's God or faith. Delilah tricked Samson into telling her the secret of his great strength – which came from God. As long as he observed God's way, God was with him. She had his long hair cut off, which as long as he was under a Nazirite oath, he was not supposed to do. When God was no longer with him, he lost his strength and was captured by the enemy of God – the Philistines. When he no longer had God's favor, when the Lord ceased to be with him, he could no longer defeat the Philistines. Thankfully, Samson's hair grew back and when he prayed to God, God heard him and restored his strength.

Let's look at **Solomon** – David's son and the heir to the throne of Israel. The bible gives us two pictures of Solomon, the young Solomon and the old Solomon. Here is the young Solomon, **2 Chron. 1:1**, ***“Solomon the son of David established himself in his kingdom, and the LORD his God was with him and made him exceedingly great.”*** The second picture is not as pretty though, following his father's example he took many wives – most of which were not from the Nation of Israel, and they led him astray. **1 Kings 11:6-9**, ***“So Solomon did what was evil in the sight of the LORD and did not wholly follow the LORD, as David his father had done. Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the abomination of Moab, and for Molech the abomination of the Ammonites, on the mountain east of Jerusalem. And so he did for all his foreign wives, who made offerings and sacrificed to their gods. And the LORD was angry with Solomon, because his heart had turned away from the LORD, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice and had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods. But he did not keep what the LORD commanded.”*** He no longer pleased God, because he put his foreign wives above God and His Law.

The people of Judah, who were God's people, in later years turned away from God and followed Baal and other Canaanite gods. They believed they could practice idolatry and follow after immorality, and still be right with God. **Jeremiah 2:12-13** says, ***“Be appalled, O heavens, at this; be shocked, be utterly desolate, declares the LORD, for my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water.”*** They left the God who loved them to follow after gods they made with their own hands – using stone and wood. In **Jer. 5:29-31** we read, ***“Shall I not punish them for these things? declares the LORD, and shall I not avenge myself on a nation such as this?”*** ***An appalling and horrible thing has happened in the land:***

*the prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests' rule at their direction; my people love to have it so, but what will you do when the end comes?"*

We too must ask the question, if we forsake the Lord, what will we do at the end of it – when Jesus returns to judge the living and the dead, what will we do when God holds us responsible for our hearts? We must be careful to keep our hearts close to God. **Jeremiah 6:15** says of Jerusalem, *"Were they ashamed when they committed abomination? No, they were not at all ashamed; they did not know how to blush. Therefore, they shall fall among those who fall; at the time that I punish them, they shall be overthrown," says the LORD.*" Even in our culture, I see some who are never ashamed of immorality and don't know how to blush over their sins.

**Hebrews 3:12-13** gives a warning to Christians, *"Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end."* The idea that Christians who turn to God cannot lose their souls is a myth. God urges us to stay faithful to Him and to continue worshiping with the church. **Hebrews 10:25** says, *"not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near."*

Some have decided to forsake assembling with the church altogether (*while I understand wanting to be safe with Covid 19, I would at least expect that people not only watch the live stream or the saved video, but also to continue to participate with giving and supporting the work of the Lord in Plymouth, we still have expenses even if many don't come to the building. I would also expect them to comment on the sermon, greet the saints, make calls, texts, send cards to the saints, so we can still encourage one another as commanded.*) But I have not seen this with all the saints. Forsaking the church is forsaking Christ – it is his earthly body after all.

**Hebrews 10:26-31** says this over those who purposely forsake the assembly, *"For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries. Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses. How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace? For we know him who said, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay." And again, "The Lord will judge his people." It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."*

We need to remember; God has a track record of punishing those who forsake him and who lose all respect for what is good and right. We must not, as Jerusalem did in the days of Jeremiah, listen to the wrong people and take the grace of God for granted. The Jews hardened their hearts and refused to repent. God punished them. God will punish us too, if we harden our hearts and refuse to repent. God is the God of Grace, but *He is also a holy and just God who punishes sin.*

Will you refuse the blessing of God, so that you can live a worldly life without God? Would you gain the world but lose your soul? Will you stray from the truth? **James 5:19-20** says, *"My*

*brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.”*

Most people know **John 3:16**, but not many remember **John 3:18**, *“Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.”* You can’t expect God to be with you and bless you, if you do not believe and serve the Lord. According to **Ephesians 2:12**, people outside of Christ are *“separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.”*

*Yes, it matters whether you are with God and whether God is with you!*

**John 14:23-24** tells us, *“If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. Whoever does not love me does not keep my words. And the word that you hear is not mine but the Father’s who sent me.”*

The heavenly Father loves and abides with those who obey the words of His Son.

If you have the Lord with you in this life – you can be sure you will live with Him in the life to come. In **2 Cor. 5:6-8** we read, *“So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, for we walk by faith, not by sight. Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord.”*

To begin a relationship with the Lord, place your faith and trust in Him. Believe not only in His existence, but in His teaching and promises. Serve Him by obeying his commandments. Turn away from the sinful things of this world and begin to live for Jesus – this is called repentance. Now with your love, faith, and penitent heart, confess Jesus as the Christ the Son of the living God and according to the command of Jesus, be baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of your sins – **Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16 and Romans 6:3-7**. Let us help you with this journey, if you have any questions please contact us here at the Plymouth Church of Christ.