

Eternal presence– Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> June 2014

***“If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.***

***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. After a little while the world will no longer see Me, but you will see Me; because I live, you will live also.”***

***John 14:15-19***

Beloved in The Lord,

Today in our service we commemorate Ascension Day, which was last Thursday. Ascension Day is a very significant day in the Church Year, as it marks the first phase of a Divine Exchange that took place after Jesus rose from the dead on Easter morning. Jesus left this world on Ascension Day and returned to Heaven where He sat down at The Father’s right hand. In His place, He then sent The Holy Spirit, who arrived ten days later on the Day of Pentecost.

There seems to be an interesting principle in God’s Kingdom, that only one member of The Holy Trinity abides in the World at anytime. In preparing His disciples for Ascension Day Jesus clearly stated: ***“But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you” (John 16:7).***

Clearly Jesus told them, that if He remained in the World, then the Holy Spirit wouldn’t come. When He has gone, then The Holy Spirit will come in His stead. So many people say: “If only I was alive when Jesus walked the earth...” You know, the fact of the matter is that we are better off today, then they were at that time, because Jesus was limited by time and space. If he was for example in Jericho, He could not be in Jerusalem or Galilee at the same time. But now through The Holy Spirit, He is in Jericho, Jerusalem, Galilee, Sydney, Latvia, Indonesia, Sweden, NZ – in fact in everyplace all of the time.

Wherever Christians gather, there He is. Wherever God’s Word is, there He is. The Holy Spirit is everywhere and His main role is to represent Jesus. Jesus taught about The Holy Spirit:

***“But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and will disclose it to you. All things that the Father has are Mine; therefore I said that He takes of Mine and will disclose it to you “ (John 16:13-15).***

We are taught a number of important things here. Jesus said that all that the Father has is His, and all that He has, The Holy Spirit has, and He will disclose it to us. When Jesus left, He sent God The Holy Spirit to continue the work that He had begun, namely to build the Kingdom of God.

Jesus, honourably fulfilled His part of the mission. He left His place in Glory, came down to earth as a man, born of a woman, and at the age of 33 He died on Calvary on the Cross, bearing the punishment for the sins of all men. He shed His blood to pay our sin debt in full. God raised Him from the dead on Easter morning, and then for the next 40 days Jesus appeared to believers,

strengthening them and preparing them for the future. He paved the way for the ministry of God The Holy Spirit. Jesus told the disciples not to do anything, till The Holy Spirit came.

We read: ***“Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And behold, I am sending forth the promise of My Father upon you; but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high”(Luke 24”46-49).***

Jesus told them to wait before going out and spreading the Gospel – The Good News; which is summed up in His own words: ***“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life “(John 3:16).***

They were to wait to receive empowerment before they started this work of spreading the Good News. They were to wait for The Holy Spirit. Why? Because they would not get far without the supernatural help of The Holy Spirit. In their own power they would not have the courage, the knowledge, the endurance, the love and everything else necessary to get the job done. Without The Helper, nothing would succeed.

Jesus promised: ***“but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth” (Acts 1:8).***

Only through The Holy Spirit would they have power. The Holy Spirit came, He was poured out ten days later on the Day of Pentecost, and through His empowerment The Gospel spread like wild fire.

Nothing has changed today. Jesus is present with every Christian, through The Holy Spirit. Jesus last recorded words to His disciple’s on Ascension Day were: ***“lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age”(Matthew 28:20).***

Praise God for the eternal presence of Jesus through The Holy Spirit. He is with us always, everywhere. He is with us in all of our daily grind. He is everywhere and personally abides in the hearts of all who believe in Him. What is vital for us is that we learn to recognise Him, and to trust in Him. and to receive from Him all that He gives to us.

So often, many Christians struggle with things they don’t have to struggle with. They carry burdens they do not have to carry. So often Christians are so weak and do not live in the light of God’s blessings, simply because they do not receive what God is giving them.

Paul wrote in his letter to the Ephesians:

***“For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God.***

***Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen” (Ephesians 3:14-21).***

The Holy Spirit is given to us to strengthen, to empower our inner man. God’s presence is given to us so that we may live in victory, so that our light would shine brightly and our salt be salty. So that God’s love would flow through us and from us.

That is why it is of vital importance that we receive all that God is giving to us. If we do not read His Word daily, then we do not even know what He has given us.

Recently I read a story about a post war immigrant who migrated from Italy to the USA. He had saved up just enough money for the passage by ship. It took all of his money. A day before sailing, he used the few remaining dollars that he had to buy a block of cheese and some crackers. Every day, he would eat a small ration of his supplies. As he walked around the ship, he couldn’t help but notice the other passengers always eating hearty meals in the dining room. He looked at them through the glass, and then went to his cabin and had a bit of his cheese and crackers, all the time wishing that he had some money to buy food in the dining hall.

A number of weeks passed by, and as the ship was nearing the States, the Purser met him in the corridor. He said “Sir I have noticed that you haven’t been joining us in the dining room. Is something wrong? Have we offended you in some way?” The man replied rather embarrassed: “No not at all. You see I do not have any money to pay for meals!” To this the bursar replied: “Sir, did you not read your ticket? The meals are all included in the price of passage!” You see, he had satisfied himself with cheese and crackers, when he could have had three meals a day in the dining room. All because he had not studied the ticket.

How many Christians, how many of you are living on cheese and crackers, and not dining on the fullness of God’s Word, simply because you have not read it? We have God’s presence all the time, in everyplace, in every situation. All we need to do is to realise this, and to learn to fellowship with Him. To pray and read His Word. There is nothing that the Holy Spirit does not know, and nothing is beyond His power.

He is given, sent to us as our Helper, as our Advocate. He works in, through and under God’s Word. Paul wrote a little further on in His letter to the Ephesians: ***“Be filled with the Spirit” (Ephesians 5:18).***

The tense in Greek makes it clear that the meaning is be continually filled with The Holy Spirit. That is live your life in continual fellowship with The Holy Spirit, aware of His eternal presence. Live knowing that He lives in your heart and is on your side.

Trust in Him and live victoriously. You have His eternal presence.

Amen.

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All Bible quotations taken from New American Standard Bible.