

Teaching for 8-20-08

Hungering for His Presence

We live in a world that is filled with a variety of hungers. The hunger for purpose, for being loved, for relevance, for esteem, for material gain, for peace, and for so much more. The list could go on and on. Everyone comes to each day with a list of life-hungers we desire to satisfy. The daily news and our own relationships are filled with examples of the life-hungers people are seeking. Some people are willing to pay any price to satisfy a life-hunger for esteem or for success. Even the Olympics demonstrate for us how important such hungers are. No Olympic athlete can even think of taking home the gold medal if he or she does not make that attainment the top hunger of his life. As we think of desiring the presence of God in our lives, our churches and our communities, the question confronts us with an almost abrupt bluntness. Is the presence of God the top hunger in our lives?

A Relevant Question?

To begin with we must ask, *is this even a relevant question?* There are so many needs in our world and in our lives. Should we honestly expect that seeking the presence of God should be our number one life-hunger? Shouldn't there be other greater hungers in our lives? What about our need for food and shelter? What about our need to provide for ourselves and those we love? What about our need for self-esteem and the other things in life that we value? Should we neglect all of those simply for an intangible like the presence of God? Aren't we supposed to work hard to provide for our families? Isn't the presence of God just one of those intangible extras that we can hope for when everything else is going OK? To ask such questions reveals our flawed understanding of who God is.

The Source of All

The presence of God is not an optional accessory to life. He is the source of all life and provision. Think of Psalm 23. We read it; we speak it; we may even memorize it. *The Lord is my shepherd; I have all that I need* (Ps. 23:1). In what context does the sheep have all that he needs? When he is wandering off doing his own thing? No, in the presence of the shepherd! The entire context of Psalm 23 is that the sheep is in the presence of the shepherd. Need protection? Psalm 31:20 declares, *You hide them in the shelter of your presence, safe from those who conspire against them.* Safety and protection are found in the presence of the Lord. Would you dare to believe that if the presence of God was to dwell in the cities of America that we would be safe from terrorist attack? Concerned for the safety of our children? Consider Psalm 102:28, *The children of your people will live in security. Their children's children will thrive in your presence* (NLT). To say that the presence of God is an added luxury is to miss the point that God is Himself the source of all life, supply, and security. He alone is the One who is able to supply our every need.

A Supreme Love

Hungering after the presence of God is more than to simply desire His protection, His blessings, or security for ourselves and our children. True hunger for the presence of God comes from a deep and Spirit-born love for Him. A true, passionate and supreme love for God is what will drive us to long for His presence more than any other thing in our lives. David's words in Psalm 27:4 have long been an inspiration and challenge to God-hungry believers, *The one thing I ask of the Lord – the thing I seek most – is to live in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, delighting in the Lord's perfections and meditating in his Temple* (NLT). When one is in love with another, that love is expressed by the desire to be in the others' presence. Nothing else will do. There are no substitutes that will satisfy. The question that each of us must ask is this, *do I love the Lord so much that I will accept nothing less than His very presence?*

Shaking it all loose

No matter where you turn these days, it seems that things are being shaken and rearranged. From societal institutions, to financial foundations, to religious mindsets. God seems to be shaking the very foundations of our society, our churches, and our lives. Could it be that God is allowing these things to be shaken so that we will realize that it is only in His presence that we find hope, love, and security? Could it be that God is testing the loves of our lives? To show us that He has not really been the number One in our lives? To show us that apart from His presence, nothing is sure and stable. As the old Gospel song used to say, *All other ground is sinking sand*. Today, would you allow God to turn your heart to make Him the number One hunger in your life? Above everything else? Yes, **EVERYTHING!** He awaits our decision.

Lord, we confess to you that you have not been the number one hunger in our lives. We have hungered after many other things before you. Today, Lord, would you by the power of Your Holy Spirit begin to give us an overwhelming hunger for You? Make us hungry for your presence above every other demand upon us from self, society, or even church. Let us not be satisfied until we live in Your presence. In Jesus Name. Amen.