

TITLE: The Value of Recognizing God's Presence, part 1

TEXT: 1 Corinthians 2:6-14

PREACHED AT: Castine 10-3-21

MAIN POINT: Help in recognizing God's presence

SERMON SERIES: Castine's Values

INTRODUCTION

1. Today, we continue with Castine's five Values: the value of conforming to the Bible, recognizing God's presence, cultivating God's talents, serving inside and out, and building authentic community. The previous two messages developed the value "conforming to the Bible." Our focus now is on "recognizing God's presence."
2. Personally, recognizing God's presence has been challenging in my life. There are times I am confident God has spoken, and God did not speak. We have enemy forces that are clever at confusing us in the ways of God. The Bible explains it this way: "For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. So, it is no surprise if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. Their end will correspond to their deeds." (2 Corinthians 11:13-15)
3. However, the Bible is clear that God makes Himself known and wants His followers to recognize His presence.
 - 3.1. Genesis 17:9, "And God said to Abraham, 'As for you, you shall keep my covenant, you and your offspring after you throughout their generations.'"
 - 3.2. Exodus 33:11, "Thus the LORD used to speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend."
 - 3.3. Amos 3:7, "For the Lord GOD does nothing without revealing his secret to his servants the prophets."
 - 3.4. Hebrews 1:1-2, "Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world."
 - 3.5. John 16:13, "When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come."
4. We have the assurance that God wants the world to know His presence, so as His followers, we should expect Him to help, lead, and be with us in all things.

DISCUSSION

1. (1 Corinthians 2:6-16) “6 Yet among the mature we do impart wisdom, although it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to pass away. 7 But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory. 8 None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. 9 But, as it is written, ‘What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him— 10 these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. 11 For who knows a person’s thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. 12 Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God. 13 And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual. 14 The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. 15 The spiritual person judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one. 16 “For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?” But we have the mind of Christ.”

2. John 4:24 informs us that “God is spirit.” Therefore, according to the Corinthian passage just read, recognizing God’s presence is a spiritual matter that requires spiritual enlightenment.
 - 2.1. The follower of Jesus can view the same circumstance as someone not interested in Him, and one recognizes God’s presence, and the other either understands it as nature being kind or a coincidence or gives it no attention at all.

3. To recognize God’s presence, we understand spiritual things through spiritual means, something someone not surrendered to Jesus is incapable of doing.

4. Since God is spirit, it takes spiritual mechanisms to recognize Him.
 - 4.1. As I said last week, the Bible guides Jesus’ followers to recognize God’s presence. There are times you read the Bible, and a verse or series of verses capture your attention; it is as if they “jump off the page,” and a deep conviction forms that God is speaking this verse to you.
 - 4.2. We recognize God’s presence when He answers specific prayers.
 - 4.3. In combination with specific prayer, we recognize God’s presence when distinct opportunities present themselves. For example, you desire to meet someone who shares your spiritual values. So you begin by talking with God about the desires of your heart. Then, sometime later, you are shopping and connect with a person

who seems to align with what you asked from God, so you begin to explore if this is God's presence leading you.

- 4.4. We recognize God's presence through the wisdom of other spiritual people. There are times God uses other godly people to reveal His presence through something they say or do. I think each of us should seek out godly people to lead us in recognizing God's presence in a way we cannot experience alone.
5. Today is a communion Sunday in which we share the bread and cup of Jesus.
 - 5.1. As I prepared for this moment, I was struck by the phrase, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." (Luke 22:19)
 - 5.2. Some have experienced another giving his life to save them. I am sure this person will never live the same again.
 - 5.3. This is a time that we intentionally enter into as we recognize Jesus gave His life for us that changes what we see and what we seek.