

THE INDISPENSABLE PRESENCE

“Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant...” —PHILIPPIANS 2:6-7

It is one thing to be aware of the life Christ lived on earth, but it is essential to know how He lived on earth. We can deeply admire and worship Him for the way He lived, enough to want to emulate His goodness, but all that would do is frustrate and disappoint us.

To illustrate, a young man can be a good soccer player and envied by his friends because of it, but were he to play with seasoned professionals he would soon realize he was not as good as he thought himself to be. The higher the standard against which he plays and by which his skills are judged, the more aware he becomes of his inability. It does not take long for frustration and disappointment to set in. The same thing happens again and again in our Christian lives. The more we see ourselves in the light of the life of Jesus, the more we become aware of our inabilities and failures.

Jesus said many astonishing things about Himself. Regarding His activity, He said, “I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing...” (John 5:19). Regarding His judgments, He said, “By myself I can do nothing; I judge only as I hear, and my judgment is just, for I seek not to please myself but him who sent me” (John 5:30). Regarding His speaking, He said, “When you have lifted up the Son of Man,

then you will know that I am who I claim to be and that I do nothing on my own but speak just what the Father has taught me” (John 8:28).

In all three areas, Jesus’ claim is that “He can do nothing”. It sounds anti-climatic and quite empty, yet remarkably it is an important word in the humanity of Jesus. In each of these statements, Jesus relates His dependency wholly upon His Father. He later clarifies this when He says to Philip, “Don’t you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work” (John 14:10). Jesus fulfilled His role as a man on earth with the understanding that the indispensable presence of God within Him would be the source of accomplishing His work. Just as it was the Father living in Jesus, doing His work, it is the indispensable presence of Jesus Christ, living in us, doing His work in us and through us.

PRAYER: Dear precious Lord, thank you for your presence in me. You’re all I need and I pray for your continual work in me and through me.

TO REFLECT UPON: Am I living every day in union with Christ, enabling Him to work in me and through me?