

“The Heart of Worship: Presence” (Week 2)
(Ps. 27:1-8)

- **The Power of Presence**

- The heart of worship is...*Presence*. That is a *powerful* word. What do you think of? What stirs within you when you hear the word, “*Presence*”? When you pull on that thread, you find that it leads right into our heart of hearts, to our core longings, hopes, fears.
 - With the people you treasure most, isn’t that what you want more than anything? *Presence*? To be *with them*? With your friend, parent, spouse, child—sure, there are things you want them to do, and *not* do. They may have a variety of roles in your life, but more than anything, you want to be *with* them. When you’re separated, your heart longs for them. When you face a crisis, your first instinct is to reach for them, *call them*—you want to hear their voice, to be near them.
 - Presence can also bring to mind experiences of *absence*. When you lose someone you love: the ache for their presence, the longing in your heart is so big, it might be deeper than the sea. Or maybe there’s someone in your life who *should have been present*, but they weren’t—you feel like they abandoned you, or they were physically present, but in every other way absent. Those kinds of wounds mark us for life. Or think of how people use *isolation* to punish others: one of the worst things you can do to a prisoner is *force them into isolation* (sometimes, we isolate ourselves, too). Many people fear *being alone* even more than dying. Even in healthy relationships, we struggle, in this age of *distraction*, to be present with the ones we love.
 - Bottom line: the greatest gifts and joys in life have to do with *presence*. The greatest pains and hardships in life have to do with *presence*. So many of our greatest hopes, and fears, have to do with *presence*. *Presence* is such a powerful thing.
- So, it’s no wonder that *presence* is a key theme in Scripture. You can find that thread and trace it from start to finish, Genesis to Revelation, in God’s great Redemption Story. Think of all the different feelings and thoughts you had just now

about *presence*, and consider this breathtaking truth: the God who created you desires all of this for you. **He wants to be present with you, He wants you to be present with Him, He wants you to seek and long for His presence the same way you do for the people you love.** He made you for this. He wants a relationship.

- Last week, we talked about *God's holiness*, how He is set apart, high and exalted, *mind-blowingly-awesome*. Now think about this: *that same high and holy God wants to be near us*. He is *so far above and beyond us*, yet, *so willing* to draw near and meet us at our level. The Bible is the story of how we turned away and ran from His presence, but He paid the highest cost and accomplished everything so we could *be with Him* again.
- **Seek His Face**
 - That brings us to our main Scripture today. We were created to enjoy the presence of God. But life in this fallen world is full of obstacles, distractions, and battles that try to keep us from that. King David was someone who knew both—the presence of God, and the battles of life. Psalm 27 is a Psalm of David that helps us navigate all of this, and it is profound. David was not a king who worshiped. David was a worshiper who became king. In 1 and 2 Samuel, you can read the unlikely story of his journey to become king after the first king of Israel, Saul, failed in his leadership. The Bible says David was a man after God's own heart; he was also a flawed and troubled human. He saw many victories by God's grace; he also endured defeats and massive failures. Psalm 27 is a wonderful window into what it means to endure desperate battles and to seek God's presence in the midst of it all. Let's read this together:
 - ***"The LORD is my light and my salvation—whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life—of whom shall I be afraid? When the wicked advance against me to devour me, it is my enemies and my foes who will stumble and fall. Though an army besiege me, my heart will not fear; though war break out against me, even then I will be confident."* (27:1-3)**
 - When battles come, what do you run to? King David declares, *the Lord is my light*—He is my source of life, He helps me see clearly, He dispels the darkness. *The Lord is my salvation*—He rescues me, He preserves me, He restores me. *The*

Lord is the stronghold of my life—my connection to His presence, my secure attachment with Him, is what truly stabilizes my life. When you can say this, you can have confidence that even when the battle is on, you have the ultimate victory because you know and live in the One who is victorious.

- *Though an army besiege me, my heart will not fear...* What a vivid image—just imagine being trapped in a city under siege. Sometimes, we feel *surrounded* by enemies, troubles, struggles on every side. David says, *even then, my heart will not fear, I remain confident. Why?! How?! Because he knows and abides in the presence of God!* God's presence is a shelter that no enemy can conquer, that will never end, that will never run out. *I know the Lord, the everlasting God, I know who He is, I know that I am His and He is mine. Therefore, I can be confident and content even when battles come. What can they do against God?* Now look at this:
 - ***“One thing I ask from the LORD, this only do I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze on the beauty of the LORD and to seek him in his temple.” (27:4)***
 - One thing, really? Well, yes! Once you discover the glory of who God is, the beauty of His presence—you realize that not only is there no one like Him, but *there is nothing better*. Remember, He *created* all the things, and all the people we love! What are the things you love most in life? *I love my wife, my kids, coffee, a campfire under the stars, music, soccer, great books, skateboarding, the sound of water and the sight of mountains*. Who invented and made these things possible? How much greater must *He* be? He is the source of all the things we love and so His presence is infinitely greater! Do you love and delight in your child? Do you love and delight in the simple gifts of life and the wonders of this world? How much more can you love and delight in the presence of the One who made them? *One thing I ask from the Lord, this only do I seek—to dwell in His house, to gaze on His beauty, to seek Him. I want one thing: His presence. I want to be with Him!*
 - ***“For in the day of trouble he will keep me safe in his dwelling; he will hide me in the shelter of his sacred tent and set me high upon a rock. Then my***

head will be exalted above the enemies who surround me; at his sacred tent I will sacrifice with shouts of joy; I will sing and make music to the LORD. Hear my voice when I call, LORD; be merciful to me and answer me. My heart says of you, 'Seek his face!' Your face, LORD, I will seek." (27:5-8)

- The Bible talks about *God's dwelling place*. It can also be translated, *the secret place* or *hiding place*. "You are my hiding place and my shield; I hope in your word." (Ps. 119:114) "You are my hiding place; you shall preserve me from trouble; you shall surround me with songs of deliverance." (Ps. 32:7) The hiding place, the secret place, is *God Himself*—it's His *presence*. It's finding such communion with Him that we can rest in the refuge of His powerful presence.
- The passage ends with this: "My heart says of you, 'Seek his face!' Your face, Lord, I will seek." What a profound thought—*the face of God*. The Hebrew word *Panim* is used hundreds of times in the O.T. It can mean the literal surface of something, or the face of a person, or the personal presence and nearness of God Himself. Here are some other examples:
 - **"You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand." (Ps. 16:11) "Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there." (Ps. 139:7-8) "The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine on you..." (Num. 6:24-25)**
 - **God's Plan All Along**
 - God has a Name. God has a *Face*. God is a Person—in fact, 3 Persons in One Being, Father, Son, Spirit—and He made you in His image and He wants to have a relationship with you.
 - The heart of worship is...*presence*. *God's presence*. When we come to worship the Lord, the invitation is: *Seek His Face. Seek His Presence. Seek to know Him. Seek to be with Him.*
 - The Face of God, the *Presence* of God, is a thread that goes throughout the whole story of Scripture. When Adam and Eve disobeyed the one commandment in the Garden and sin broke the world, "...the man and his wife hid themselves from the

presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden.” (Gen. 3:8) When Jacob wrestled with the Lord all through the night and got his name changed to *Israel*, **“Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, ‘It is because I saw God face to face, and yet my life was spared.’”** (Gen. 32:30) When God’s presence led His people through the wilderness and met with Moses in the tabernacle, **“The Lord would speak to Moses face to face, as one speaks to a friend.”** (Ex. 33:11) When the tabernacle became the *temple* where people would come and seek God’s presence, the Lord said about that place: **“If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.”** (2 Chron. 7:14) And when the Word became flesh and God Himself “tabernacled” among us, Paul said: **“For God, who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God’s glory displayed in the face of Christ.”** (2 Cor. 4:6)

- Folks, the whole Bible is a narrative of God coming to dwell among His people after we rejected Him, and as you follow the story, you see God comes closer, and closer, and closer—*He wants to be with us*. From the *Garden*, to the *Tabernacle*, to the *Temple*, to the Incarnation of Christ—and even further, to the point where *we ourselves become the Temple, His presence now in us!* And the whole story culminates with the future hope of all things made new, when Heaven comes to earth. Remember how the book of Revelation ends? It says there’s a new heaven and a new earth, all things new. **“And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes...They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads...’”** (Revelation 21-22)
- The heart of worship...is the **Presence of God. Seek His Face.** Dwelling in His presence is our past, present, and future. This is our destiny, as the people of God. Will you spend time, like David, *in the secret place, seeking His face?* It’s about *being with God, getting to know God*. He’s given us His Word, His Spirit; He’s given us prayer; fellowship with His people. *We just have to seek.* Are you willing

to seek, to dig, to knock, to cry out, until you find what you're looking for? If you seek, *you will find—He promised!*

- Just try this: sometime this week, go somewhere quiet, free from distraction—I don't care if it's a sanctuary, or a coat closet. Get there, hidden away from everything else. And then just do what Psalm 46:10 says: *be still and know that I am God*. Everything will flow from there. We come together collectively to worship, *to seek His presence*. And we go to quiet places, on our own, *to seek His presence*. Because God wants to be with us, and we get to be with Him. That's what we're here to do every time we gather: let's seek His face together, church!