

## “Dwelling Place” – Pr Jim Sprengle, Easter 7 – May 16, 2021

- I. **John 14:19-20** – <sup>19</sup> Yet a little while and the world will see Me no more, but you will see Me. Because I live, you also will live. <sup>20</sup> In that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you.
- II. **Have you ever read the Gospel of John and scratched your head?**
  - a. Maybe you're like me.... and you find the wording a little confusing or hard to follow.
  - b. If you step back and consider what was going on in the disciples' minds, maybe they were struggling to understand too!
  - c. Jesus often speaks to them without clearly spelling it out, even if they would understand everything after it all happened.
    - i. In this section, Jesus is giving them some comfort after they heard He would leave them and go where they could not follow... in other words, He would ascend into heaven to be with the Father (our celebration on Ascension Day last Thursday)
    - ii. The disciples didn't want to hear this... it was troubling to lose their teacher and Savior – at least in bodily presence.
    - iii. But Jesus comforts them with the knowledge that He goes before them to make a home in heaven (Jn 14:2) and that they will never be orphans because the Holy Spirit will come to be with them (v 16-18)
  - d. In some ways, I envy the disciples (envy is a bad word choice, but I appreciate that they had Jesus in their very presence).
    - i. To have Him right there to ask questions, to go to Him for advice, to see Him in action as He loved people and healed them... as He stood up to the Pharisees and teachers of the law in boldness... as He lived and led His earthly life.
    - ii. How much of an impact would that have on any of us?
    - iii. I think of knowing Jesus today..... and knowing Jesus as one of those disciples....
      1. When it comes to knowing Jesus today, faith is the operative word.
      2. But Jesus commends the person who believes... who has trust in Him without being with Him in person...
  - e. Jesus knows that by faith we are able to know Him just as deeply – just as intimately – and in ways that go far beyond our own imagination... you see,
- III. **Many Christians today are motivated by a sense of duty and tradition.**
  - a. It's not that they don't believe, but they serve, worship and give as though they don't really know God...As though they are not seeing God for who He really is.
  - b. Have you seen the commercial a few years back where a young man is from a country that has a tradition of arranged marriages?

- i. He lives in America for awhile and wonders if this whole arranged marriage thing is good.
- ii. However, because it's his duty and tradition, he grudgingly agrees to welcome his future wife at the airport.
- iii. He buys some flowers because it seems like the right thing to do – even though he doesn't really want to...
- iv. His face was all gloomy waiting for her arrival
- v. And then, he sees her coming toward him from the terminal... and everything changed...
  - 1. He couldn't have picked a more perfect match if it was his choice... her smile was beautiful and she ran up and gave him a big hug like she'd always known him.
  - 2. His doom and gloom turned to joy immediately – wow! She's perfect!
  - 3. Being dutiful and obedient was no longer the issue, now he was really excited about this whole thing!
  - 4. So, what changed? He actually experienced and connected with her.... Something happened that made him want to know her more!
- c. Often we serve God out of obligation.
  - i. We drag ourselves to church, force ourselves to serve others—but our hearts aren't really in it.
  - ii. We're like that guy at the airport, grudgingly holding flowers for God.
  - iii. We're trying to live holy lives because we know we're supposed to, but it's a burden without any joy...<sup>1</sup>
- d. The trouble is we stuck in the idea of an arranged marriage, when it's so much bigger than that!
- e. What changes us to move from duty and obedience to joy and energy?
- f. God's Word is at the very source of our relationship and how He reveals Himself to us!

#### IV. **How can we possibly know God without His Word?**

- a. Many people come to church like ours and groan... all this stuff written by men... ugh –
  - i. But where do you think our entire service is from? God's Word!
  - ii. I could take you step by step through each part of your bulletin, and the order of service is using God's Word for us to worship and praise Him on the one hand – and receive His gifts of forgiveness and grace on the other hand.
  - iii. What you are mainly doing in worship on Sundays is hearing and repeating the Word of God (hearing and responding)
- b. Or how about Bible studies, devotions and just sitting down in the Word?
  - i. I'm not saying reading the Word is easy... as I started this sermon today... sometimes parts of the Bible make me scratch my head.

- ii. However, when I say, “I’m a Christian” or “I’m a Christ follower” – what that means is that we know Christ – by means of His Word!
    - iii. When you skip out on Bible studies, leave your Bible on the shelf, or just neglect that time with Him, you are missing an opportunity to be blessed, to be encouraged, and to be energized by knowing Him.
  - c. I can personally testify to the power of God’s Word in my own life...
    - i. As I simply committed to reading a portion of it every day for a year it changed my life forever –
    - ii. Out of that year came a different relationship with my Lord and Savior, along with a renewed energy and motivation to serve Him
  - d. The most important thing that the Word opens up for us is seeing Jesus... knowing Jesus for all He did and continues to do for us.
- V. **Jesus opens our hearts to the mystery of His dwelling place...**
  - a. He came into this world and lived a real life
    - i. And in an act of pure love, He went to the cross in our place – not out of obligation and duty... but love for you and all of us.
    - ii. It wasn’t the end of the story when all His blood was poured out and His very life was stripped away, because three days later came a victory that we still celebrate to this day – the dead Jesus is the living Jesus!
    - iii. Throughout the next 40 days, Jesus opened the disciples up to what?
      - 1. The Word! The fulfillment of all the prophecies and how God came into this world to dwell among us
      - 2. And finally, Jesus said, now that you’ve got it all, take it into the world and share it... and He ascended into heaven.
    - iv. But just as He said in our reading today – He would send the Holy Spirit – and make us His dwelling place (Jn 14:20)
      - 1. Just as He is in the Father, so we are in Jesus... and Jesus dwells in us.
      - 2. Open your heart and mind to the amazing grace of God – we are the dwelling place where He chooses to reside!
  - b. When we come to know who God truly is, and where He is... we’re energized and ready to be His witnesses in the world.
  - c. It’s no longer about obedience and duty and tradition... it’s about love and service and joy.
  - d. By faith and the power of God’s Word, you are the dwelling place of God.
    - i. You are able to know Him in powerful and meaningful ways... all by His work and love
    - ii. Open your heart to know God – Open the Word to know God – and by faith, remember you are the dwelling place where He chooses to reside. Amen.

<sup>1</sup> Source: Drew Dyck, *Yawning at Tigers* (Thomas Nelson, 2014), page 54