

Knowing Christ's Presence Today

LHC: Message Two (030420AM)

Week 2: Knowing Christ's Presence Today

(Revelation 1:2)

As the end of days approaches, you can find genuine and lasting hope by knowing Christ's presence!

SUNDAY: Know That Christ Is Alive

[John] bore witness to the word of God, and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, and to all things **that he saw**.

— Revelation 1:2, emphasis added

John saw Jesus on Patmos—alive and powerful. The book of Revelation introduces us to the risen Christ of the Gospels and shows Him as the real Christ. When Jesus stepped from the tomb on Resurrection morning, God unleashed the greatest power of all. And that is what Jesus Christ is like TODAY!

Often we fail to understand the magnitude of what really happened that morning. After His Resurrection, something had wondrously changed: Jesus *no longer limited himself to one location*. From the manger to the cross, He had been limited for thirty-three years to being *in only one place at a time*. Jesus had humbled himself, emptied himself, and limited himself to being localized. But now He was accessible anywhere, anytime, and to anyone! His power was then available everywhere, and all the time! That is absolutely amazing!

Even in His condition of being localized, Jesus accomplished more than any human ever has or will. He grew up perfectly, mastered God's Word perfectly, and related to His family, friends, and neighbors perfectly for thirty years.

At the dawn of Jesus' public ministry, He perfectly obeyed God at His baptism; He perfectly defeated Satan's advances in the wilderness; and He perfectly began to serve God's will as He set out as an itinerant preacher.

For three and one-half years Jesus awesomely served in the power of God. Wherever He went, Christ's very presence made sure that death fled, disease faded, and despair melted. Broken bodies that came in contact with Jesus were mended; ruined lives were repaired; sightless eyes were restored; deaf ears were filled with sound; missing fingers were returned; and hungering lives were satisfied. And Jesus did all that while being *in one place at a time*.

Christ is alive! After the Resurrection, because Jesus was no longer trapped by time and space, He seemed to be everywhere at once. The New Testament records Jesus crisscrossing the tiny land of Israel from north to south over the next forty days.

We find him on mountaintops, back roads, inside locked rooms, on the shore, and everywhere else that He was looked for or needed. He met with the grieving women at the tomb, comforted the sorrowing Mary, calmed the frightened disciples (inside the locked room without opening the door), showed up at dawn on the shores of the Sea of Galilee, confronted and restored a soaking-wet Peter, assured a doubtful, trembling Thomas, and visited with every one of the five hundred others who had believed on Him.

Jesus accomplished all that in an occupied country crawling with spies, soldiers, and religious leaders filled with hatred. And for forty days after the empty tomb, He was never seen, even once, by any unloving eyes; He was never touched, even once, by unloving hands. Christ's presence was unstoppably available—everywhere. And He's the same today!

For the previous three and one-half years, Jesus' followers could have any need met— *if they could find Him*. But now, because of the cross and empty tomb, He is available anywhere, anytime, and to anyone. Therefore, any sin can be forgiven; any doubt can be overcome; any sadness can be comforted; any disappointment can be stopped; any fearfulness can be arrested; any loneliness can be ended; and any defilement can be cleansed.

Today, know that Christ is alive! So think about Christ being constantly available within you to help your fears, doubts, pains, and temptations. He is only a prayer away—so call upon Him!

My Prayer for You This Week: *Father, I pray that "Christ being constantly available within" will become more than just simple words to us. Today, as we contemplate Resurrection morning—the greatest event of all time—may we know that the One who left the tomb that day is present with us even now. For You are everywhere, all the time, for anyone who wants to know You. For those who do not yet know You personally, we pray that they would cry out to You from their heart of hearts and say, "Oh God, be merciful to me, a sinner!" May they come to know true faith in You, Lord Jesus. We thank You for all that You do because You are no longer limited to being in one place at one time, but are with us everywhere! In the name of Jesus we thank You. Amen.*

MONDAY: Know What Christ Did

That which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.

— 1 John 1:3, emphasis added

The greatest power unleashed in Jesus is that He is now available anywhere, anytime, and to anyone. In fact, look at all the chapters in the gospel by John where Jesus was meeting people right where they were—just as He does today:

- Watching Nathaniel sit and think under a tree, Jesus answered his questions (1:46–49). The Lesson: **You can bring your questions to Jesus.**
- Attending a wedding, Jesus rescued the servants when the wine ran out (2:9). The Lesson: **You can bring your emergencies to Jesus.**

- Waiting up, Jesus explained salvation to Nicodemus when he slipped to Christ's side in the dark (3:2). The Lesson: **You can bring your struggles to Jesus.**
- Sitting on the well, Jesus revealed His true identity to a seeking woman overflowing with sins (4:18–19). The Lesson: **You can bring your sins to Jesus.**
- Approaching the paralytic lying on the ground, Jesus healed him when he was hopeless and helpless (5:6). The Lesson: **You can bring your limitations to Jesus.**
- Coming across the waves to a storm-tossed boat, Jesus quieted the fearful disciples (6:17–19). The Lesson: **You can bring your fears to Jesus.**
- Crying out for anyone who thirsts to come to Him, Jesus promised to give “rivers of living water” (7:37–38). The Lesson: **You can bring your longings to Jesus.**
- Looking into the heart of the adulterous woman who stood stained by her sins, Jesus showed her mercy and forgiveness (8:3–11). The Lesson: **You can bring your deepest stains to Jesus.**
- Finding the blind man in his darkness, Jesus opened his eyes (9:6–7). The Lesson: **You can bring your confusing times to Jesus.**
- Opening the door to a safe and secure home for lost sheep, Jesus offered safe pasture (10:9). The Lesson: **You can bring your longing for security to Jesus.**
- Defeating death and its hopelessness at the grave of Lazarus, Jesus offered new life (11:25–27). The Lesson: **You can bring your fears about death to Jesus.**
- Accepting the worship of Mary who loved Him so, Jesus received it as a sweet fragrance (12:3–8). The Lesson: **You can bring your love to Jesus.**
- Confronting His disciples with their dirty feet and hearts filled with pride, Jesus washed away their sin (13:5–15). The Lesson: **You can bring your besetting sins to Jesus.**
- Assuring His disciples when they had troubled hearts, Jesus promised that they had a future mansion with Him in heaven (14:1–6). The Lesson: **You can bring your future to Jesus.**
- Coming close to prune away unprofitable parts when lives were fruitless, Jesus caused that pruning to bear fruit (15:2). The Lesson: **You can bring all of your life to Jesus.**
- Promising to convict when hearts were sinful, Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to keep His children on track spiritually (16:7–9). The Lesson: **You can bring your secrets to Jesus.**
- Praying for sanctification by the truth of His Word, Jesus promised to open His children's understanding of the Scriptures (17:17). The Lesson: **You can bring your Bible-study times to Jesus.**

- Watching over His disciples in their darkest hour, Jesus looked out for them in spite of their weakness in the garden (18:8). The Lesson: **You can bring your times of weakness to Jesus.**
- Caring for His mother even as He died, Jesus set an example of the importance of family (19:25–27). The Lesson: **You can bring your family to Jesus.**
- Finding Thomas in his doubt and bringing him to faith, Jesus lovingly reassured him (20:25–29). The Lesson: **You can bring your doubts to Jesus.**
- Standing on the shore when Peter needed restoration, Jesus lovingly inspired Peter to greater service for Christ (21:15–18). The Lesson: **You can bring your failures to Jesus.**

I encourage you to go back through the above list and pause on the bold action statement at the end of each point. Think about what Christ wants to do in your life personally. It can help cement these truths in your mind if you say each of them out loud: “I can bring my questions to Jesus; I can bring my emergencies to Jesus; I can bring my struggles to Jesus”; and so forth. Do you see the power of personalizing Christ’s presence in your life today? Believe that He is just as near to you, and ask for His help!

TUESDAY: Know That You Believe Christ

And Thomas answered and said to Him, “My Lord and my God!”
— John 20:28, emphasis added

Thomas was not present on the first occasion when Jesus appeared to His disciples after His Resurrection. The others told him about it afterward, but he replied, “*Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it*” (John 20:25 NIV).

Thomas is our pattern; he reflects a part of us because we also struggle and doubt. Yet Christ understands and will meet us at that point of struggle—as He did for Thomas by appearing again a week later when he was present. Although Jesus offered to fulfill the conditions of Thomas’ test, the mere sight of Him was enough; he fell at Christ’s feet and worshiped.

Is that sight not clear enough for you also? Are Jesus’ wounded hands not evidence enough for you of His love? God the Father says that His action in Christ is perfectly clear, so much so that there is no excuse for failure to believe it. In fact, He says that the way of salvation in Christ *has been made known* (Romans 3:21 NIV). The way of salvation has been made as clear as a pristine mountain stream.

Today the hand of a gracious God holds out the way of salvation to you. He asks you to look closely at His hand, for it is a wounded hand, one bearing the print of the nail received by Jesus when He died for your salvation. By faith you may put out your hand and touch that wound, which is irrefutable evidence of God’s great love for you.

The One extending that hand died for you. Allow Him to enclose your hand, to enclose you, and to bring you into that great company of those who possess eternal life and who shall never perish.¹

Bring your lack of faith and your doubts to Him. With the hand of faith, reach out and touch Him *today!* For wherever you are, Jesus is there. Just think of all Christ can do now that He is available anywhere, anytime, and to anyone!

WEDNESDAY: Know That Christ Defeated Death

*Through death He . . . **destroy[ed] him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release[d] those who through fear of death were . . . subject to bondage.***

— Hebrews 2:14–15, emphasis added

Over fifty-five million humans will enter eternity this year. Some will perish through starvation or murder, others through disease and accident. Some will die painlessly while others will die painfully, but *all of them* will die. Is that a result of a catastrophic tragedy? No, it is simply daily life and death on planet Earth. Death itself is not the ultimate tragedy; the ultimate tragedy is being *unprepared* for death. The solution God offers for sin is the gift of His Son, whose death on the cross paid the penalty for man's sin and rebellion. *God went to the limit.*

All humans are helpless: rich or poor, armed or unarmed, weak or powerful, known or faceless. To rescue us from our hopeless sinful state, God has communicated with us, and has taken on humanity by becoming the man, Jesus Christ. His life is recorded in the Bible. Jesus has revealed to us, in a life identifiably human and unmistakably divine, that the true nature of God is love. This is how the Bible states it: "*God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son [Jesus Christ], that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life*" (John 3:16 NIV).

Simple faith in Christ gets us registered in heaven (1 Peter 1:4; see also Hebrews 12:23). Christ gives us a special, private PIN number, which is a secret name that only He knows (Revelation 2:17). We are His. We have access to Him through faith, and that is the greatest treasure on earth.

Now comes your part: Are you willing to admit that God is right when He says you have rebelled? Do you recognize your need of a personal relationship with God? Because Jesus took the penalty for your sins, accept the Bible's invitation: "*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved . . .*" [for] *if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. . . . For "whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved"* (Acts 16:31a; Romans 10:9, 13).

If these verses have spoken to your heart, simply tell God that you want to change the direction of your sinful life by receiving Jesus!

THURSDAY: Know That Christ Knows You

*"My sheep hear My voice, and **I know them**, and they follow Me."*

— John 10:27, emphasis added

There is an unforgettable illustration in the funeral ceremony of Empress Zita, the last Hapsburg Empress:

Thousands fell in line behind the coffin drawn by six black horses. The procession came to a stop at the Capuchin Church in Vienna, and there, a long-observed tradition was enacted. As a member of the funeral party knocked on the closed door of the church, a voice from within asked, “Who goes there?”

The titles were read aloud: “Queen of Bohemia, Dalmatia, Croatia, Slavonia, Galicia. Queen of Jerusalem, Grand Duchess of Tuscany and Krakow.” “I do not know her,” came the response from within the church.

A second knock, and the question of “Who goes there?” brought forth the response, “Zita, Empress of Austria and Queen of Hungary.” Again the reply, “I do not know her.”

When the inevitable question was put the third time, the answer was simply, “Zita, a poor sinner.” “Come in,” came the welcoming voice, as the doors were slowly opened.²

Salvation is the greatest work of God in the universe. The convict who found Christ as he studied a Moody correspondence course would certainly agree with that statement. In answer to one of the questions, which gave him an opportunity to express where he stood in relation to his newfound faith, he wrote down: “I am a new man in an old body.” It was a most perceptive remark, for that is exactly what salvation is.

Being “a new man in an old body” will go even further than that saved prisoner realized. One day he will be “a new man in a new body.” Listen to this seven-step summary of what happens to all who come by faith to God through Christ: (Emphasis added in the verses below.)

1. **Regeneration—when God changes my heart:** “*I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; . . . and cause you to walk in My statutes*” (Ezekiel 36:26–27).
2. **Conversion—when God changes my life:** “*Unless you are converted . . . , you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven*” (Matthew 18:3).
3. **Repentance—when God changes my mind:** “*Bear fruits worthy of repentance*” (Matthew 3:8).
4. **Adoption—when God changes my family:** *You received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, “Abba, Father.” The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs— heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ* (Romans 8:15–17).
5. **Sanctification—when God changes my behavior:** *For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified. . . . “I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds I will write them*” (Hebrews 10:14, 16).
6. **Justification—when God changes my state:** *Having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ* (Romans 5:1).

7. **Glorification—when God changes my place:** *“Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me . . . that they may behold My glory which You have given Me”* (John 17:24).³

Are you a recipient of God’s greatest work in the universe? When you know God, and salvation’s fruit unfolds in your soul, He does a mighty work that I like to call “The Signature of God.” Has “The Signature of God” been written across your life? If not, I urge you to make a conscious choice today to live in such hope!

FRIDAY: Know That You Know Christ

Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. *Test yourselves . . . that Jesus Christ is in you.*

— 2 Corinthians 13:5, emphasis added

Perhaps your name will be called today, and your life will end here on earth. Are you ready? Do you want to make sure you are going to heaven? Be sure you know that your sins are gone. Be sure you know that God has justified you. What does it mean to be “justified”? In popular everyday language justified can be paraphrased “just as if I’d never sinned.” Consider this illustration:

Some years ago a wealthy Englishman bought a Rolls Royce car and took it to France on his vacation. It broke down. At great expense the factory flew out a mechanic and not only repaired the car but entertained the customer in the best available hotel. When he arrived home he expected to receive a large bill but none came. Eventually he wrote, asking for his account to be rendered.

He received this reply: “Dear Sir, We have no record of anything ever having gone wrong with your car.”⁴

That is exactly what it means to be justified. It means that God has no record of anything ever having gone wrong in your life. Knowing Christ means knowing that your sins are gone forever. Hallelujah!

The Sinner’s Prayer: The following prayer expresses the desire to transfer trust to Christ alone for eternal salvation. If its words speak of your own heart’s desire, praying them can be the link that will connect you to God.

Dear God, I know that I am a sinner and there is nothing that I can do to save myself. I confess my complete helplessness to forgive my own sin or to work my way to heaven. At this moment I trust Christ alone as the One who bore my sin when He died on the cross. I believe that He did all that will ever be necessary for me to stand in your holy presence. I thank you that Christ was raised from the dead as a guarantee of my own resurrection. As best as I can, I now transfer my trust to Him. I am grateful that He has promised to receive me despite my many sins and failures. Father, I take you at your word. I thank you that I can face death now that you are my Savior. Thank you for the assurance that you will walk with me through the deep valley. Thank you for hearing this prayer. In Jesus’ name. Amen.⁵

If you prayed in faith, God will receive you. He will take your sins and put them away—never to remember them against you forever! Oh, how wonderfully complete is the deliverance our God has provided for sinful man!

SATURDAY: Exposed to Christ

*When they saw the boldness of Peter and John, [who] were uneducated and untrained men, . . . **they realized that they had been with Jesus.***

— Acts 4:13, emphasis added

The transformation Christ brought about in the apostle John is remarkable. He manifested symptoms of intimate, personal exposure to Jesus, such as the following traits, which reflect the character of Christ. Ponder whether or not these traits are also in your life:

Authenticity: John became honest, genuine, wholesome, and real. From Scripture, it is easy to see that he really loved Jesus. In John 13:25 and 21:20, we see him reclining on Christ's chest and talking with Him. John kept as close as he could to Jesus. **Are you experiencing the reality of knowing Christ with authenticity?**

Humility: John was no longer at the center of his own world; Christ was. That is the essence of humility. Thus, the apostle John became the "disciple whom Jesus loved." That precious description of John is found five times in the New Testament (John 13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7, 20). **Are you enjoying life as God meant it to be by experiencing true Christlike humility?**

Loyalty: John always wanted to be wherever Jesus was. Nothing kept him away. It was a passion he had and kept. John was at the Transfiguration (Matthew 17:1); he witnessed the raising of Jairus's daughter (Mark 5:37); and he was invited into the intimate moments of Gethsemane (Mark 14:33). **Are you experiencing the utter completion offered through loyalty to Christ and His family?**

Responsibility: John earned Christ's trust by his obedience. If Jesus gave him a job, he did it wholeheartedly. He was disciplined to the point of being trustworthy. That is why we see the touching moment at the cross when Christ entrusted his mother, Mary, to John's care (John 19:26–27). **Are you experiencing the joy of living up to your God-given responsibility in this life?**

Tenacity: John was willing to endure to the end. Nothing could deflect him; he clung tenaciously to Christ. In John 21:20–23, Jesus told him that he would have to wait "until I come." And wait John did. Revelation is the record of Christ's coming to him, just as He promised. **Are you tenaciously clinging to Christ?**

Make a choice to live in hope. You have a choice to live in despair or hope, so I pray that you will make the choice to live in hope! Get exposed to Christ today. Then live with the "symptoms of exposure to Him" flowing from your life. Read Revelation 1; look at who Jesus really is! See what John saw. Like John, invite Jesus to be near you.

Then, for His glory, He will make you authentic, humble, loyal, responsible, and tenacious!

As we close this week's devotionals, I encourage you to sing this song to the Lord, asking Him to make His presence sweetly known to you this very moment!

Hiding in Thee

*O safe to the Rock that is higher than I
My soul in its conflicts and sorrows would fly;
So sinful, so weary—Thine would I be:
Thou blest "Rock of Ages," I'm hiding in Thee.*

*In the calm of the noontide, in sorrow's lone hour,
In times when temptation casts o'er me its power,
In the tempests of life, on its wide, heaving sea,
Thou blest "Rock of Ages," I'm hiding in Thee.*

*How often in conflict, when pressed by the foe,
I have fled to my Refuge and breathed out my woe;
How often when trials like sea billows roll,
Have I hidden in thee, O Thou Rock of my soul.*

Refrain:

*Hiding in Thee, Hiding in Thee,
Thou blest "Rock of Ages," I'm hiding in Thee.*

— William O. Cushing (1823–1902)

¹ Adapted from James Montgomery Boice, *John Volume 3: Those Who Received Him, John 9–12* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999), pp. 785ff.

² Ravi Zacharias, *A Shattered Visage: The Real Face of Atheism* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1990), p. 167.

³ Adapted from John Phillips, *100 New Testament Sermon Outlines* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2002), p. 100.

⁴ John Phillips, *100 Sermon Outlines from the New Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1997), p. 100.

⁵ Erwin Lutzer, *One Minute After You Die* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1997), p. 143.

