

Sermon Title: The Spirit of Maranatha

Scripture Reading: Revelation 22:17, 20-21

Missions Sunday

Praise the Lord for the testimonies of our mission teams who have returned from China, Jakarta, and Papua! As I prayed for the teams while they were away God continually put on my heart that each of the teams would return with different treasures. These treasures don't represent the healings or miracles that were released on the missions, but rather the experiences of the heart that each team has returned with.

The China team was able to experience the heart of the underground church. They were able to meet with church leaders of thousands; leaders who were burnt out, experiencing heavy spiritual warfare, yet still pure and vibrant for the Lord. The Jakarta team experienced the plight of the small Christian church on the island of Java which is mostly Muslim. They were able to minister to and stay with dirt poor Bible college students who have abandoned all for Christ. The Papua team was able to experience a land and culture far different from any developed country. They were able to experience the reaping of the harvest through over 100 physical healings, the fire of God, and His love penetrating the most broken of hearts. God is good!

All Points to Something Greater

I believe there is a desire in all of us for something great. To be honest, I think if we could have looked ahead and seen what would happen during each trip, a lot of us would have chosen to go to Papua to experience the reaping of the harvest and the miracles there. I think we all want to experience heaven here on earth. If we could have it our way we would live always moving in the power and authority of God and never struggle, never suffer, and never be in need.

In the same sense I think any American soldier in World War 2 would have chosen the final battles and victory in Germany over having to storm the beach on D-Day or press through and press through more against the Germans in France and Netherlands. Victory tastes sweet. Sure there were still dangers towards the end of the war, but the Germans were in retreat, undermanned, and low on supplies. There was more of an ease towards the end of the war.

I believe if we were soldiers during World War 2 that God would choose not to put us at the end of the war where we would want to be, but rather at the beginning. He would want us to experience it all... even the loss of fellow soldiers, a wound in battle, and learning to persevere through everything. He would want to develop our character and our trust in Him as much as possible.

But more than the highs and lows of war, more than the experiences of battling and persevering, I believe God wants to release in each of us a specific spirit, a heart motive that underlies every experience of our life: Maranatha. Come, Lord Jesus. Our Lord, come.

Please put up Revelation 22:17, 20-21...

Revelation 22:17, 20-21 – The Spirit and the Bride say, “Come.” And let the one who hears say, “Come.” And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price. He who testifies to these things says, “Surely I am coming soon.” Amen. Come, Lord Jesus! The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen.

The Bible ends with these verses. There is a cry of the Holy Spirit and of the church for Jesus to return. And there is a cry to every broken and thirsty person to come to the Lord. These cries speak of the spirit of maranatha. Maranatha is Greek for, “Come, Lord Jesus,” or “O Lord, come.” Maranatha represents a cry for relationship. It represents a desire to experience and to know the love of Jesus. It is not one sided though. It is not meant to only be the cry of our hearts. It is also the cry of God’s heart.

God Yearns for Us

Before we can fully understand the power of the spirit of maranatha within our hearts, we need to understand the power of this spirit in God’s heart. There is a cry for relationship with us that has been in God since before creation. You all have likely heard John 3:16 many times, how God so loved you that He sent His Son to die for you that you might be able to have eternal relationship with Him. That alone should blow our minds. That alone should turn our lives upside down. God so loved us that He sent His Son for us. There was no action we took. He loved so He sacrificed so we may come to Him. This is the spirit of maranatha. **He loved so He sacrificed so we may come to Him.**

I am going to expound in a moment on how love drives us to sacrifice so that we may come to Him, but first I need to emphasize God’s love for us.

In Genesis 1 there is a long and beautiful account of creation. God makes the sky, the stars, the sun, the moon, the land, the seas, the birds, and the animals. And then He makes us. And in Genesis 1:26 there is a distinction between us and everything else He made.

Genesis 1:26a – Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness...”

We alone, out of all creation, were made in the image of God. A great and awesome God, a beautiful and wonderful king, chose to make us and us alone in His image. A beautiful God made us in His image. So what does that make us? **Beautiful.**

Out of all of creation, what does the Bible focus on? Us. God’s Word is all for us. Out of all of creation who did Jesus die for? Us. His death was for us.

True Heaven is Intimacy

The Bible begins in a beautiful garden with just two people. The Bible ends in a city filled with people. Often we think of the Garden of Eden as a place with lush vegetation and beautiful rivers and peaceful animals. And we think of heaven as a place where the streets are paved with gold. But the Garden of Eden was not paradise because of the green plants and sweet fruit. **It was paradise because it was a place of intimacy between God and His son Adam and daughter Eve.** Heaven is not heaven because the streets are paved with gold or because there are angels who play beautiful music on their harps. Heaven is heaven because it is a place of intimacy between God and all of His loved ones.

Many of us would say that the Grand Canyon, the Niagara Falls, or the Himalayan mountains are beautiful and are things to be visited and admired. But here in Seoul when we look outside we don’t see such beautiful scenery, instead we see building after building, streets filled with traffic, and sidewalks cluttered with people. We see a huge city of millions and millions of people. And I ask you, which would God prefer more? The peaceful landscapes of the Grand Canyon, the Niagara Falls, and beautiful mountain ranges, or a cluttered city of millions of busy people? **God would choose the city.** His treasure isn’t this earth. This

earth will pass away. **His treasure is you.** His heart is for His people. **Heaven itself is a city. He loves us so much that He wants to gather us all together and hold us close to His heart.**

I know the Papua team saw some amazing scenery on the island. They walked on beautiful beaches, saw mountains that took their breath away, and a land untouched by pollution or industry. During all their time there they had a Bible college student who served as a guide and took them around place to place on the island. **And what do you think God was more enamored by during their time in Papua... the breath taking scenery... or their guide?**

Paradise is true intimacy with God. Think of all the stars in the sky, all animals on the earth, and all the mountains and rivers seas... and now think of you, just you. Which would God prefer? All the stars, animals, mountains, rivers and seas... or you? Which did He make in His image? Which did He die for? Which is He returning for? You are His treasure.

Romans 8:19 says that creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. Even creation possesses this spirit of maranatha. There is a desire to see intimacy between us and God. Creation is longing for heaven, true heaven, which is us having intimacy with God.

All About Relationship

The spirit of maranatha is all about relationship. It is about complete intimacy with our God, knowing Him in His power and in His sufferings, and Him knowing us in our highs and in our lows. No marriage can remain healthy if the two only try and endure happy memories and try to avoid all conflict. True intimacy is experiencing everything together, the good and the bad, the easy and the difficult. To keep another out of a part of our life is to cut true intimacy. To keep another from experiencing a certain part of us is to reject true intimacy.

God wants to experience us completely... and that includes the areas we are ashamed of and try to hide. God also wants us to experience Him completely. Moses and Elijah are considered two of the greatest men of the Old Testament. They were men who God used to produce amazing miracles and demonstrate His glory through. They were also men who endured persecution, rejection, and suffering. They endured it all. The highs and the lows. The great victories and the moments of simply wanting God to end their lives. These were the men who God honored. These were the men God would meet with and speak face-to-face to. They had their faults but they weren't ashamed to hide their faults from God. They allowed for true intimacy with God. **Their treasure wasn't the things of this world, their treasure was intimacy with God.** Their treasure was true heaven.

This became true for the disciples as well. For three years they walked with Jesus and became His closest friends. They experienced the highs and lows with Him. They made horrible mistakes in front of Him and experienced both His rebuke and His acceptance. Their relationship with Jesus was as real as it gets. They couldn't hide their faults from Him. And yet Jesus treasured them and prayed earnestly to God for them. Jesus accepted them all. He even washed the feet of Judas who would betray Him. When Jesus returned to the disciples after He was raised from the dead their intimacy was made complete. He had proven to them that no matter their faults and their struggles, He would be with them and love them. Their trust in His unflinching love was fully established.

Apostolic Ministers...

I remember attending in 2004 the OneThing conference in Kansas City that IHOP (International House of Prayer) holds each year. During the conference I attended a seminar

that had a great title of something like, “How to be an Apostolic Minister.” I didn’t know much about the apostolic at the time, but the seminar title and description gave me the idea that this seminar would help me understand how to have the ministry of apostles like Peter and Paul. I remember attending and the speaker, Allen Hood, requested that we first have some time of worship before he would speak. He invited a worship leader with a guitar onto the stage and we all began to worship together in the small auditorium. And the Spirit of God began to stir in the room. God’s presence was thick. We continued to worship and worship. Eventually the speaker came back on stage, crying softly. He was overtaken by God’s presence and love. He then spoke these words to us: **The secret to being a true apostolic minister of God is missing Him.** Missing Jesus. How much do you miss Him? Jesus told His disciples that once the Gospel would go to the ends of the earth that He would return. And so they lived to make this happen. They took the Gospel as far as they could go and sacrificed their lives that the world might know Him and that He might return. The disciples missed Him. They had experienced intimacy with God. **They had experienced true heaven here on earth.** And they wanted Him back and were willing to make whatever sacrifice needed to be with Him and for others to be with Him.

God’s love was made complete in them. The spirit of maranatha. God loved so He sacrificed that we might come to Him. And so the disciples loved God, so they sacrificed, that we too might come to Him.

The spirit of maranatha so consumed the early church that their greeting to one another was, “Maranatha,” or, “O Lord, come.” They were no longer living for themselves or for the things of this world. For the early church they knew they could face imprisonment and even execution any day for their beliefs. Their treasure wasn’t here on earth. Their treasure was in heaven... true intimacy with God.

Experience Him Completely

Today you have all heard three different testimonies... China, Jakarta, and Papua. Three different experiences. And each represent a part of God’s heart. Each represent another step towards knowing God’s heart and growing in intimacy with Him. Many of you are going through different experiences right now as well. Some are experiencing the highs, while others are experiencing the lows. No matter what you are going through though, you can be rest assured that God is bringing you into deeper intimacy with Him. He loves you so and He is calling to you and revealing Himself to you through your every experience. And I want to encourage you church, ask for the revelation of the spirit of maranatha. Ask God that you may see and know His constant love for you, His calling to you, and that you are treasured by Him far above all other creation. Invite God into every area of your life. Offer Him complete intimacy. You will begin to experience tastes of heaven like never before.