

## When You've Been With Jesus - Acts 4:13

One Sunday, after the young pastor's first sermon at his first church, an elderly lady said to him, *"That was the worst sermon I've ever heard."* Not wanting to cause a scene, he merely ignored her remark. Again, the next Sunday after he preached, she said, *"That was the worst sermon I've ever heard."* This went on for some weeks. Finally, the pastor asked one of the deacons about her. The deacon responded, *"Pastor don't pay much attention to what she says. She's feeble-minded. She just goes around repeating what everyone else is saying."*

People do say the strangest things after morning worship. They'll tell you that your message was great when you know they know they slept through it! However, there are days when everything seems just right, and everything connects. There are days in which God's presence is so real, everyone senses it.

In Acts 4:13, there is a vivid description given of Peter and John. After the Holy Spirit fell upon them at Pentecost, they were changed from timid followers to bold disciples who were able to stand up to anyone. They had even been arrested for teaching and preaching Jesus, and healing sick folks in His name. And as they were being questioned by the rulers and elders and scribes, this observation was made about them. *"When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus."* **Acts 4:13 (NIV)**

How can we know we've been with Jesus? How can we know we've worshipped God and been in His presence? This morning, I want to give you some distinctive elements that are present when the people of God are in the presence of God. First, you know you've been with Jesus when:

### **1. God is Worshipped Through Thanksgiving.**

Married couples sometimes struggle expressing thankfulness to each other. An old farmer and his wife were sitting on their front porch swing of their farmhouse. As he thought back on their 42 years of marriage, he suddenly realized what a wonderful wife she'd been. But he had never so much as thanked her for all those meals, for all that house cleaning, and kid raising she'd done. And even that day, as they watched the sun set, all he could say was, *"Honey, you've been such a wonderful wife that there are times I can hardly keep from telling you."*

For what are you grateful? For what can we thank God? We can thank him for life and health. We can thank him for family, for husbands and wives, parents and children, especially grandchildren. Of course we must thank Him for our salvation and our security in Christ. We should thank Him for our church family and the wonderful family of God.

If you are having difficulty with worship, just stop. Consider all the blessings that God has given you. Then, in detail, thank Him for each of them.

Throughout the Bible, Thanksgiving is portrayed as an act of worship. At various times and through various emotions, people expressed their gratitude to God. When should you thank God?

**When we're happy. Deuteronomy 8:10 (NIV)** says, "*When you have eaten and are satisfied, praise the LORD your God for the good land he has given you.*"

**When we are at peace. Colossians 3:15 (NIV)** says, "*Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.*"

**When circumstances are difficult. 1 Thessalonians 5:18 (NIV)** says, "*Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.*"

**When we face trials.** James 1:2 says, "*My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials.*"

**When we're worried.** Phil. 4:6 says "*Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.*"

Jesus recognized worship in Thanksgiving In Luke 17:11-19, the story is told of Jesus encountering ten lepers on His way to Jerusalem. Leprosy is a hideous disease in which the skin and the limbs actually rot away and fall off the body. Because it was highly contagious, these men kept their distance from Jesus, but they recognized Him and begged for Him to have mercy on them. They knew that only God could help them.

Jesus told them to show themselves to the priest. That was what the law said one was to do if leprosy went away. At this point however, they were still infected. What Jesus asked them to do was to take a step of faith. Note that vs. 14 says, "*as they went, they were cleansed.*"

Only one of those ten men came back to thank Him, and vs. 16 says he was a "*Samaritan*," – a group of people who normally didn't have anything to do with a Jew. Yet in great faith, he worshipped God through thanksgiving. Why, because He knew he'd been with Jesus, and he couldn't hold back his thanksgiving.

On your notes, take time today to complete the sentence, "*Lord I worship you because I am thankful for...*"

Second, you know you've been with Jesus when:

## **2. God is Worshipped Through Praise.**

Praise comes from a Latin word meaning "*value*" or "*price*." So, to give praise to God is to proclaim His merit or worth. Thanksgiving is about what God has done for you. Praise is about who God is.

Many terms are used to express this in the Bible, including "*glory*," "*blessing*," and "*hallelujah*." In fact,

"*hallelujah*" is a transliteration of the Hebrew for "*Praise the Lord.*" In fact, the Hebrew title of the book of Psalms ("*Praises*") comes from the same root as "*hallelujah.*" Psalms 113-118 are called the "*Hallel.*"

We can praise the Lord in many ways. Israel used to offer sacrifices as praise. In 2 Sam. 6:14 (NIV), it says that King David "*danced before the Lord*" in praise as the ark was brought home to Jerusalem.

In Biblical days, people raised their hands in praise to God. **Psalms 134:1-2 (NIV)** says, "*Praise the LORD, all you servants of the LORD who minister by night in the house of the LORD. Lift up your hands in the sanctuary and praise the LORD.*"

**Psalms 77:11-12 (NIV)** reminds us that praise can be meditation. It says, "*I will remember the deeds of the LORD; yes, I will remember your miracles of long ago. I will meditate on all your works and consider all your mighty deeds.*"

**Psalms 66:16 (NIV)** refers to praising God through a testimony. It says, "*Come and listen, all you who fear God; let me tell you what he has done for me.*"

Praise is almost invariably linked to music. Read **Psalm 150.**

But while the Bible teaches us to praise, there are also warnings about the way we praise God. Praise is to originate in the heart and not become mere outward show. Jesus echoed Isaiah's words in Matthew 15:8, "*These people draw near to Me with their mouth, And honor Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me.*"

Praise should be done orderly. **1 Corinthians 14:40 (NIV)** says, "*Everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way.*"

But when outward or inward praise is carried out as a pure expression of love and adoration for God, it is one of the most recognizable ways to tell that a person has been with Jesus. On your notes, take time today to complete the sentence, "*I praise the Lord because...*" Third, you know you've been with Jesus when:

### **3. God is Worshipped Through Giving.**

Why do people give their money to God? Well, some give out of a sense of *duty*. Some give out of a sense of *fear*. Some give only when the *mood* hits them. But thankfully, some give out of *worship*.

The Bible teaches we are to give cheerfully (2 Cor.9:6-8). First we see the law of sowing and reaping (v.6). The principle is obvious: *the more we sow, the more we reap!*

Second, each of us is to give "*as he purposes in his heart.*" It can happen on the spur of the moment, but it's more biblical to plan what you give!

Third, we shouldn't give "*grudgingly or of necessity*." "*Grudgingly*" means wishing we could do something else with it. "*Of necessity*" means we feel we must give.

Fourth, remember "*God loves a cheerful giver*." The word "*cheerful*" comes from the Greek word *hilaros* from which we get our English word "*hilarious*." What an attitude!

Fifth, remember that "*God is able to make all grace abound toward you*" so that you will have "*all sufficiency in all things*." When you give to God, He will take care of all your needs.

Everyone should give to God because giving is an act of worship. When you don't give, your worship is incomplete. Even our children are being taught to give in Children's Worship.

Giving to the Lord, fully and wholly, is a sure sign that you've been with Jesus, Let's give in the spirit of worship. Let's give cheerfully... hilariously!

On your notes, take time today to complete the sentence, "*I will worship the Lord by giving...*"

Fourth, you know you've been with Jesus when:

#### **4. God is Worshipped Through Prayer.**

Prayer is our means of communicating with God. Everyone should pray when we come to God in worship. There are several things we should come to the Lord's House to pray about:

We should pray for forgiveness and cleansing. We should pray prayers of thanksgiving and praise. We should pray prayers of intercession for others, like I taught the children a while ago.

When someone prays publicly there should always be a response. Of course, we should listen carefully and say "*Amen*" in agreement, but we should also pray along silently. As my baseball coach used to say, "*Don't just stand there with your teeth in your mouth, do something!*"

Jesus said in **Luke 11:9 (NIV)**, "*So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened to you.*"

**James 5:16 (NIV)** says, "*Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.*"

An unmistakable evidence of having been with Jesus is a desire and a dependence on prayer.

On your notes, take time today to complete the sentence, "*Lord, I worship you today by praying for...*"

Also, you know you've been with Jesus when:

#### **5. God is Worshipped Through His Word.**

As we speak to God through prayer, God speaks to us through His Word. God's Word is so important. For

one, it's **eternal**. We can depend on it. **Psalms 119:89 (NIV)** says, "*Your word, O LORD, is eternal; it stands firm in the heavens.*"

God's Word is **nourishment**. **Jeremiah 15:16 (NIV)** says, "*When your words came, I ate them; they were my joy and my heart's delight, for I bear your name, O LORD God Almighty.*"

God's Word is also **profitable**. **2 Timothy 3:16-17 (NIV)** says, "*All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.*"

God's Word is also a **light** in a world of darkness. **Psalms 119:105 (NIV)** says, "*Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.*" **2 Peter 1:19 (NIV)** says it is "*a light shining in a dark place.*"

God's Word brings **hope**. **Romans 15:4 (NIV)** says, "*For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.*"

Teaching God's Word is first and foremost in ministry. God's words are vital. My words are not. If you ever leave this church, don't go to a church where the Bible is not clearly explained.

When you come to worship, ask God to speak personally to you through the message. Take notes. Look up references. You don't eat only on Sunday. Don't wait until then to open the Book.

People who have been with Jesus cannot live without a daily dose of His Word.

Take time today to on your notes to write out your favorite Bible verse, and worship God through it.

Finally, you know you've been with Jesus when:

## **6. God is Worshipped Through Obedience.**

Did you know that the greatest acts of worship are not singing, lifting our hands, or preaching or anything that takes place on Sundays? The greatest acts of worship are acts of simple obedience to God each day of the week.

Note **Rom.12:1 (NIV)**, "*Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God--this is your spiritual act of worship.*"

You see, what we do in church on Sunday has little meaning if we are disobedient away from church. Again, let's notice God's words to Israel about their insincere worship. Read **Is. 1:11-19**.

Mark Twain encountered a businessman from Boston during his travels that said, "*Before I die, I will go to the Holy Land. I'm going to climb Mt. Sinai and from the top shout the Ten Commandments at the top of my voice!*" Unimpressed, Twain responded, "*I've got a better idea. Stay in Boston and keep 'em.*"

**Conclusion:** I'm going to give everyone here the opportunity to get with Jesus today. I want you to really worship as God leads you. During this invitation, you will have the opportunity to be obedient. You may need to come to this altar and pray. You may need to come here and get things right with God. Or, you may just want to stand where you are and sing, or lift your hands to the Lord. You may need to go to someone and make things right with them - maybe ask for their forgiveness, or to apologize. You may need to give of yourself and go to a member of the nominating committee and volunteer for service. While we sing the invitation hymn will you just worship the Lord today by being obedient?