

## Celebrating the Presence and the Power of the Lord Here

### 1 Thessalonians 1:2-5

**Thesis:** The Lord is here in his presence and power. We need to grasp what we have here, appreciate it, become more aware, and share what we have intentionally with others.

**Text:** *We always thank God for all of you, mentioning you in our prayers. 3 We continually remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. 4 For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you, 5 because our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction... (1 Thessalonians 1:2-5).*

We are in the middle of our series on the More of God and the 60/60 Experiment. The Lord wants each of us to experience more of God. *I pray that the Father of glory, the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, would impart to you the riches of the Spirit of wisdom and the Spirit of revelation to know him through your deepening intimacy with him (Ephesians 1:17 PassionNTPsa).* We are learning through the 60/60 Experiment to be more aware of the God who is with us, in us, and will never leave us nor forsake us.

Today, in this service, I want us to celebrate the presence and the power of the Lord here.

The Lord's presence and power are here. We need to grasp what we have here, appreciate it, become more aware, and share what we have intentionally with others.

Let's read 1 Thessalonians 1:2-5.

*We always thank God for all of you, mentioning you in our prayers. 3 We continually remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. 4 For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you, 5 because our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction. 5 because our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction... (1 Thessalonians 1:2-5).*

The good news is that the Lord's presence and power are here. The bad news is that we fail to grasp what we have here at Calvary Community Church. I am afraid that we sometimes take for granted the presence and power of the Lord in our midst.

People all over the world are hungry for what we experience on a regular basis.

**1. Testimonies of conferences in Myanmar and outreaches to the villages**

- a. At the conference in Maymyo which Pastor David Biakkung hosted, there were representatives from 2 different Baptist Associations in Chin State.
  - i. They had heard the gospel of salvation.
  - ii. But they had never heard of the gospel of the kingdom of God.
  - iii. They had no idea what Jesus was doing today to save, deliver, heal, and encourage according to Luke 4:18-19. And, they surely had no idea that Jesus invited them to partner with him in what he is doing in the earth.
  - iv. But when they heard the gospel and experienced the power of God, the presence of the Holy Spirit, and deep conviction, they were changed. "If God can use you, then, God can use me." We kept hearing that testimony over and over again. As they practiced putting into action what they heard, as they prayed for one another, they saw God touch and heal. Freely they received. So, freely they are now giving away what they have seen, heard, and experienced. They will never be the same.
  - v. They kept saying, "We have been to seminars, trainings, and teachings. But we have never experienced anything like this."
- b. At the conference in Kalaymyo which Pastor John Cung hosted, more than 75% of the attendees were first-timers.
  - i. They had come from all over the region, some taking as many as 3 – 5 days to get there.
  - ii. And, they left transformed. They left convinced that they could pray for one another and do the works of Jesus. They left full of faith, hope, and love. They left more committed to the Lord and what he is doing in the earth.

**2. Testimonies of guests who came to our shelter and community members who served here during Hurricane Harvey; and, testimonies of those who came here from other cities to serve here**

- a. The guests who came to our shelter in 2017 because of Hurricane Harvey talked about the presence of the Lord here.
- b. Members of the community who came here to serve talked about the presence and power of the Lord here.

- c. People from other cities and states who came into our building talked about something that was tangible and different here.
  - d. Lives were impacted by the good news, the power of God, the presence of the Holy Spirit, and the conviction of the Lord.
- 3. Testimonies of guests who come into our building**
- a. Each week we have guests whom the Lord draws to this place. Some of them find us on the web. Some see our signs. Some come here by invitation.
  - b. When they come, they see, hear, and experience something that they have not experienced before.
  - c. Some stay. Some don't come back. But many times they try to put into words how they experienced something like no other place here.
- 4. Testimonies of people who have left Calvary and who talk about what the Lord does here and is doing here; they send people to us all the time**
- a. We have friends who have left Calvary, for whatever reason, and have gone to other churches.
  - b. Still, they send people our way for equipping, encounter, and experience with the Living God.
  - c. They tell their new church families how grateful they are for what they have seen, heard, and experienced of the Lord here.
  - d. They are advocates and witnesses for what the Lord is doing here.
- 5. Testimonies of people who have moved to other cities and places**
- a. And through the years, the Lord has moved our members to different cities.
  - b. When they leave, they contact us as pastors and lament that "they can't find a place like Calvary in their new hometown."
  - c. We tell them not to spend all their time looking for another Calvary. Rather, they are to be a source of salt and light and a source of blessing to release the DNA of what the Lord put in them at Calvary for the sake of the church which God leads them to join.

**What do we have here?**

- 1. The presence and power of the Lord are real and tangible here.
- 2. The messages which the Lord has given to us are transformational.
- 3. The love of God is expressed deeply in worship and intercession. We have incredible worship leaders and musicians who help us connect with God and create an atmosphere for God to be at home among us.
- 4. The Lord has given us influence and impact in our community and our city which are disproportionate to the size of our church.
- 5. We have an amazing youth group. Young people testify to God encounters. They pray for one another. They are growing in their capacity to follow Jesus, love

God, and serve the Lord. They intentionally invite their friends. As a matter of fact, this past Wednesday, a guest had invited another guest to Life House. That is so inspiring. Our youth are on fire. They are passionate. They need us and we need them. Our amazing Student Ministries Council and youth group are reaching about 30 – 40 people for Jesus each week, helping them to experience the love and light of the Lord.

6. We have an awesome children's ministry. For decades our children's ministry has created a place of encounter for our children, from the newborns to fifth graders. Our Wednesday night Kids Club reaches about 50 children. Our Boys Club gives a place for young men to find out it is fun and life-giving to follow Jesus. Our Girls Club gives young ladies a place to explore and express who they are in Christ. Recently at our Mother – Daughter event, moms had the chance to see what God is doing in Girls Club and in their daughters. Moms kept talking about the event and the closeness they felt with their daughters. I am so grateful to our Children's Ministry team and for all they are doing on Sundays, on Wednesdays, and at other times to help children taste and see that the Lord is good.
7. Did you know that on Wednesday nights we are reaching about 100 people in our Youth and Children's Ministries, and many of those people are not members of Calvary? That is amazing impact for the kingdom of God.
8. We have awesome Journey Groups that share deeply with one another. In our Journey Groups, people express the care and love of the Lord tangibly and unconditionally in ways that change lives. We are growing in our capacity for authenticity.
9. We have people who give away their lives to others, like serving in our Hairgrove Partnership, Cypress Assistance Ministries, Prison Fellowship, and other ministries. We have people here who are serving in their neighborhoods to facilitate Bible Studies and transformed lives. We have people who open their doors in hospitality to neighbors, helping them to taste and to see that the Lord is good. We have business people who leverage their influence to help people in so many different ways.
10. We have gifted teachers and facilitators who are helping people of all ages to experience life-change in Bible Study, in equipping classes, in prayer and share groups, in Alpha Classes, and in other life-giving fellowships.
11. We have an awesome Ladies Ministry Council that is creating a place for creative and meaningful relationships and transformation. Even guest speakers and worship leaders who minister at our ladies' events are impacted by the presence and power of the Lord among us.
12. We have Men's Ministry that is raising up to honor and serve the body of Christ here in very practical and profound ways.
13. We have a Prayer Room that is stoking the fires of revival through worship and intercession.

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I pray that 1 Thessalonians 1:6-8 will become our testimony, too.

*You became imitators of us and of the Lord; in spite of severe suffering, you welcomed the message with the joy given by the Holy Spirit. 7 And so you became a model to all the believers in Macedonia [NW Houston] and Achaia [Greater Houston and beyond]. 8 The Lord's message rang out from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia--**your faith in God has become known everywhere...** (1 Thessalonians 1:6-8).*

I pray that you will reflect on the presence and power of the Lord here. I pray that you will take time to give thanks to the Lord for what he is doing among us. I pray that we will never grow complacent nor take the presence and power of the Lord for granted. And, I pray that we will share with others what we are seeing, hearing, and experiencing... all because the Lord Jesus is worthy.