

THE SHEPHERD OF GRACE AMONG US

PART 2 of 'TOGETHER IN HIS NAME'

Last week we shared from the following scripture -

Matthew 18:20 **SLIDE**

*For where two or three are **gathered together** in My name, I am there in the midst of them.*

This week I'd like to look again at **JESUS BEING AMONG US** when we, **'GATHER TOGETHER'**.

IT'S GOD'S WILL THAT WE SHOULD BE **'GATHERED TOGETHER'** WITH EACH OTHER & THAT **THE CHARACTER OF JESUS WOULD MANIFEST AMONG US.**

Ephesians tells us something similar regarding God manifesting among us -

Ephesians 2:22 NIV **SLIDE**

*And in him you too are **being built together** to become **a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.*** (See also **1 Peter 2:5**)

1 John 1:3

*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.***

As we said last week ... **WHEN WE GATHER TOGETHER IN HIS NAME, CHRIST WITHIN US BECOMES CHRIST AMONG US** ... WE COULD SAY IT LIKE THIS ...
GOD BRINGS HIS SPIRITUAL REALITY INTO OUR HUMAN EXPERIENCE.

WHO IS THIS MAN AMONG US?

John says **'HE IS GRACE & TRUTH'**

John 1:14 **SLIDE**

*'... [Jesus] The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory ... **full of grace and truth.***

Now we could say ... **SLIDE** Jesus (the Word) was released from human flesh ...

And now **still dwells among us** ...

All over the Earth ...

All at once ...

And -

HE STILL MANIFESTS HIS FULLNESS OF GRACE & TRUTH

HE IS THE ESSENCE OF GRACE & TRUTH

John 1:17

... *The Law was given through Moses, but **Grace and Truth came through Jesus Christ.***

This is the true Jesus that manifests among us.

SOMETIMES WE MISS HIM BECAUSE WE THINK HE IS LIKE US ...

BUT HE IS NOT.

Psalm 50:20-21 Berean Study Bible

*You sit and malign your brother; you slander your own mother's son. ²¹You have done these things, and I kept silent; **you thought I was just like you ...***

The more we read about our Lord Jesus ... and hear His words ... we begin to see ... this Jesus is not at all what we naturally think he is ...

Jesus is not at all like us in His actions, His attitudes, His motives.

Problem is ...

The only thing we've ever known is **having a fallen nature ... a dead spirit ... a soul ravaged by sin ... in a fallen world** system, ruled by the god of this world.

Even when we are born again, we received a new life inside a body that is still subject to the powers of sin ... with a soul that's been trained to think a certain way ...

We are defensive, fleshly ambitious ... angry ... self-centered ... fearful ... vengeful ... critical ... **(and that's on a good day ...)**

But Jesus – THIS MAN AMONG US – is not like fallen man.

When he walked the earth ... He blew religious people's minds with His new way of grace.

AND NOW HE IS AMONG US ... WE COME UP AGAINST A CONTRAST OF LOVE & GRACE WE'VE NEVER KNOWN – OUR SPIRIT RISES & OUR FLESH SUBMITS.

1 John 3:1

'Behold what manner of love' this is ...

IT'S FOREIGN LOVE, LIKE LOVE FROM ANOTHER COUNTRY ...

HE MANIFESTS AMONG US TO REVEAL **THE NEW CHARACTER IN US ...**

AND DRAWS HIS CHARACTER OUT OF US ...
SO WE TOO CAN LIVE HIS LIFE WHICH IS IN US.

SO, WHO IS THIS MAN WHO DWELLS AMONG US?

He shows us with his lifestyle and tells us in his teaching throughout the Gospels, e.g. -

THE WOMAN CAUGHT IN ADULTERY ... and we see Grace and Truth.

THE WOMAN AT THE WELL ... and we see Grace and Truth.

IN THE BEATITUDES WE HEAR GRACE & TRUTH -

‘Do not worry about your life what you shall eat ... or wear ...

Your heavenly Father knows ... Seek Him and His Righteousness first ...’

(Matthew 6)

SO HERE IN MATTHEW 18 WE ARE SHOWN 3 THINGS ABOUT JESUS ATTITUDE TOWARD OUR CHRISTIAN LIFE ...

1. HIS ATTITUDE TOWARD POSITION & SELFISH-AMBITION
2. HIS ATTITUDE TOWARD HIS BACKSLIDING PEOPLE
3. HIS ATTITUDE TOWARD THOSE WHO OFFEND US

1. SLIDE HIS ATTITUDE TOWARD POSITION & SELFISH-AMBITION

Matthew 18:1-4

At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, “Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?”² Then Jesus called a little child to Him, set him in the midst of them,³ and said, “Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. SLIDE⁴ Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

YET TODAY WE SEE SUCH SELFISH AMBITION AMONG US IN CHURCH LIFE ...

It is the way the world acts and what it admires ... justified by its success ...

Yet in the manifest presence of the Lord, our flesh is confronted by His humility of character which calls for our new creation life to come forth.

WE REALLY SOOOOO NEED ADJUSTING DAILY ... HOURLY ...

We cannot walk far without the Shepherd ...

He’s the only one that can keep us in His paths of righteousness.

2. SLIDE HIS ATTITUDE TOWARD HIS STRAYING / BACKSLIDING PEOPLE

Matthew 18:12-14 **SLIDES x 3**

*If a man has a hundred sheep [GATHERED TOGETHER] and one of them goes astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine and go to the mountains to seek **the one that is straying?***

¹³*And if he should find it, assuredly, I say to you, **he rejoices** more over that sheep than over the ninety-nine that did not go astray.*

¹⁴*Even so **it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish** (See also Luke 15:4)*

Here we read about a sheep who decides she wants to do her own thing. So she steals the Shepherd's money, leaves the fellowship and gets back into drugs and immoral living, until she ends up pregnant, with a drug habit and gets thrown in jail. Now, what is this Shepherd's attitude? Does He say ... *'Oh well, that girl deserves all she gets. She was more trouble than she is worth ... I'm glad she's gone ... Besides, **Barbara is about to give birth so soon we'll be 100 again.***

NO! THAT'S NOT WHAT OUR LORD IS LIKE ...

HE LEAVES THE 99 & GOES AND GETS THE STRAY SHEEP ...

THE SHEPHERD ACCEPTS ALL, NOT ACCORDING TO THEIR BEHAVIOUR BUT ACCORDING TO THEIR NATURE ... WHO THEY ARE ... NEW CREATION SAINTS. All sheep are accepted and brought into the fold in His name ... even weak ones ... failing ones ... blatantly sinning ones ... confused ones ... unspiritual ones ... poor ones. **To the Shepherd, it no longer matters what you have done ... All sin has been wiped away ...**

HE NO LONGER JUDGES YOU BY YOUR FAILING ACTIONS ...

HE SEE'S YOU AS A NEW CREATION ... SOMEONE WITH A SHEEP NATURE ...

AND, HE SEEKS YOU OUT ...

- There is **NO RESTRICTION ANYMORE TO HIS OVERWHELMING care and compassion. IT IS WITHOUT RESTRICTION ... 100% directed at you ... He carries you back to His Flock ... You are His ...**

Last Friday night I saw the conclusion of a detective series. At the end a young 19-year-old guy had escaped his abductor after he had been stabbed in the stomach.

The next day the hero detective who had been looking for him came to the house of the abductor and heard some banging in the shed. He looked in and saw this young victim naked ... wrapped in a blanket ... shivering and clutching his stomach in pain. The detective ran in, grabbed him, and with assuring and comforting words, carried the young man in his strong arms, as

the young man wept into the policeman's neck. He took him to hospital and the young man lived.

It was like the Lord said to me, 'This is what I do with my lost and wounded sheep. I carry them in My bosom to a place of healing. I bring them back to the fold'.

IN THESE GATHERINGS ... WE EXPERIENCE HIM AND THIS GRACE HEALS US.

He is not like anything we've known ...

HE OFFERS INCLUSION, ACCEPTANCE, RECONCILIATION & FORGIVENESS.

HIS PRESENCE AMONG US NOT ONLY CHANGES THE BACKSLIDER ...

HE CHANGES US ... OUR OPINIONS ... OUR ELITISM ... OUR PREJUDICE ...

TWO THINGS HAPPEN WHEN WE COME TOGETHER WITH HIM AMONG US -

A. THE LOST SHEEP BECOMES CLEAN ... THE ANXIOUS GAIN PEACE ... THE ANGRY START TO FORGIVE ...

B. THE RELIGIOUS GET CHANGED ATTITUDES ... WE START TO LOVE THOSE WE ONCE HATED ... WE EMBRACE HUMILITY ...

WE NEED FELLOWSHIP BECAUSE IN THIS MANIFEST PRESENCE WE SEE OBJECTIVELY ... AND A GREATER POWER OVERTAKES US ...

THE PRESENCE OF THE SHEPHERD AMONG US OVERTAKES THE PRESSURE OF THE FLESH ...

HE DRAWS OUT THE NEW NATURE IN US ... TO MANIFEST THROUGH US ...

HOW DID JESUS SEE THE PEOPLE? -

Matthew 9:36

... When He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd.

He knew they were victims of false religious leaders ... Pharisees and teachers who bound them with heavy burdens.

He knew they needed God-appointed leaders which are 'pastors', shepherds.

SOME CHURCHES ARE EXCLUSIVE NOT INCLUSIVE -

BECAUSE SOME CHURCHES HAVE LEADERS WHO AREN'T PASTORS.

Years ago, I heard one leader say, if you're not going to be committed here in this church ... you can go somewhere else.

A few days ago, I heard of another church leader who would pull aside anyone new and say, 'Why are you here?' He then proceeded to lay a whole lot of rules and requirements onto that person if they were planning to be in that church ... even getting them to sign contracts of commitment.

THESE PEOPLE MIGHT BE CHURCH LEADERS, BUT THEY'RE NOT PASTORS ...

3. SLIDE HIS ATTITUDE TOWARD THOSE WHO OFFEND US

Matthew 18:15-16 SLIDES x 2

*Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, **you have gained your brother.** ¹⁶But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that 'by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.'*

HERE JESUS QUOTES FROM THE LAW BUT TURNS IT INTO GRACE.

LOOK AT THE OLD TESTAMENT VERSE ABOUT DEATH & JUDGEMENT -

Deuteronomy 17:6

*Whoever is deserving of death shall be put to death on the testimony of **two or three witnesses**; he shall not be put to death on the testimony of one witness.*

SLIDE YET LOOK AT WHERE JESUS COMES FROM IN MATTHEW 18:15 -

*'... If he hears you, **you have gained your brother.**'*

We naturally read that verse as judgement because that's where we come from. This is our fallen flesh. It still wants to judge those who have wronged us. But when we come into a meeting in His Name ... His character of grace and forgiveness manifests and we are changed ...

*You can't do it outside by yourself. But in the fellowship that's in His name you cannot help but let go, forgive and yearn, for **that person to be restored.***

FOR THE BELIEVER ...

You may have been struggling in your daily life ... you may be fighting fleshly habits ... wrestling with wrong attitudes ... being crushed under condemnation. Your flesh may have been leading you ... leaving your new

born spirit locked away deep inside ... buried under rubble ... your spiritual light hidden under a bushel ...

But now you come into the fold where **the manifest Shepherd comes over to you**. *You sense him looking at you with eyes full of love and compassion.*

His gaze looks through all your fleshy failings and sees the real you. **Your spirit is now illuminated in his gaze**. He speaks to your new person ... words of **love, acceptance and assurance ...**

His living water washes your soul. His words comfort your emotions. **You now remember who you are in Him ...** who He has called you to be. **The flesh falls away in his presence ...**

Revelation 7:17 Berean Literal Bible **SLIDE**

*... The Lamb in the centre of the throne will **shepherd them**, and He will lead them to fountains living of waters, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.*

This verse may be speaking of our home in Heaven But friends when we gather in His Name ... we are **AT HIS HEAVENLY THRONE OF GRACE ...**

AND WE BEGIN TO EXPERIENCE HEAVEN ON EARTH ... HERE & NOW ... WHEN WE GATHER TOGETHER IN HIS NAME ...

AND HE WASHES AWAY OUR WORLDLY WAYS.