

When We Seek The Face Of God - Psalm 24:1-6

Sunday, September 3rd, 2023, 10:00 a.m.

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Over and over again in Scripture, God encourages His people to seek Him. And this morning, I want to look at the timeless wisdom of Psalm 24. This section of Scripture offers us a glimpse into the sovereignty of God, the majesty of the King, and the call to holiness that resonates through the ages. I want to unpack what it means then to truly seek the face of God, and what we will find when we decide to go after Him with all of our hearts.

Psalm 24:1-6

1The earth and everything in it,
the world and its inhabitants,
belong to the Lord;

2for he laid its foundation on the seas
and established it on the rivers.

3Who may ascend the mountain of the Lord?
Who may stand in his holy place?

4The one who has clean hands and a pure heart,
who has not appealed to what is false,
and who has not sworn deceitfully.

5He will receive blessing from the Lord,
and righteousness from the God of his salvation.

6Such is the generation of those who inquire of him,
who seek the face of the God of Jacob.

I gotta be honest with you as we get started this morning. Seek is not a word we use regularly. It used to be a button on the remote for the VHS player. Or maybe your car radio has a seek button. I bet you have never pressed that button, have you? There's really only one time I'll regularly say the word seek. And that when talking about the game, "Hide-and-seek" Right? I can't be the only one. I'd love to play a good game of Hide-and-seek. If I play with my kids, I have to pretend I don't see the human shaped blanket on the couch that moves with every breath they take. Or I can't hear them snickering when I walk close to their hiding spot. And then when it's my turn to hide, if I actually try and hide, they give up and stop looking for me. And then when they get old enough to be good at the game, they won't want to play anymore.

The thing with Hide-and-seek is if you don't know who you're looking for... you won't really know what you're seeking! I've learned all my kids go-to hiding spots. And so depending on who I'm looking for, I know where to go. Seeking God is the same way. The first step to seeking Him, is knowing who it is we're seeking. And to know who it is we're seeking when it comes to God, we have to go back to the very beginning. God is first and foremost, the Creator!

Psalm 24:1-2

1The earth and everything in it,

the world and its inhabitants,
belong to the Lord;
for he laid its foundation on the seas
and established it on the rivers.

These first verses of this Psalm establish the fundamental truth that all of creation belongs to the Lord. The grandeur of the cosmos, and at the same time, the intricate details of our existence. They're all crafted by the hands of the Creator. God formed and established the entire world! And because He is the One who created it... He is the One everything belongs to. By acknowledging this, it should be doing something in our minds. It should be reminding us of our role as stewards... rather than owners of the earth—and its blessings. We regularly use language and ideas in our day-to-day lives that subtly change that focus. We say things like: my property, or my land, my food, my skills, or my gifts, my country, my body. I'm not here trying argue whether or not you earned the money that was needed to pay for the food at the grocery store. You're in control of your body, your brain tells your legs to move when you're walking. I can't control your body movements. And yes, the bank would agree, as long as you keep paying that mortgage you do own that property. But I'm talking about recognizing where all those things ultimately came from. We are stewards of what God created. We are not the creator. When we truly recognize God's sovereignty OVER ALL. It should cultivate an attitude of gratitude and responsibility in how we care for His creation. When we say that we're "seeking God," That means we're seeking the very One who created everything we can—and cannot—see. And we're seeking the One that literally everything belongs to. Everywhere we look, we see the handiwork of the Creator! So step one of seeking God, is knowing who His is, and what He's done.

1. Intimacy Over Information.

But seeking God's face goes beyond amassing theological knowledge of who He is. It involves cultivating an intimate relationship with the Creator. There's been a few moments as a parent where I've seen the panic on my kids face when they think they're lost in a big crowd. Their desire to find me is clearly written on their face. If someone were to stop them in their panic and ask them if they know their Mom or Dad's name. There is no comfort in them being able to list our name, address, or phone number. They know who we are, that's important... but they want to be close to us.

Knowing who God is, and what He's done is important... but He doesn't want us to know Him like a history lesson. God wants us to have an intimate relationship with Him. God didn't just create everyTHING — He created everyONE. Which means God created you! He loves you exactly the way He created you to be. And not only did He create you, and love you... But He has redeemed you. Any mistake we could make is not outside of God's ability to redeem. He is always willing to redeem & restore us to the image in which He created us. This is the God we seek!

2. The Pursuit of Holiness

To seek God's face means to align our lives with His holiness. Seeking God's face requires us to address the sin in our lives and strive for holiness. In a culture obsessed with vulgarity and shock value, there is still a quiet, not-often-spoken-about desire for purity. These days it's usually a video on Youtube called, "Most wholesome video you'll see all day" or something like that and it's a baby hysterically laughing or a golden retriever and cat that have become best friends. Those videos do so well online because they're pure. And whether we're willing to admit it or not, we crave that "pure" or "wholesome" feeling. And one of the ways we seek... and can find God, is to have a pure heart.

Matthew 5:8

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

Jesus himself tells us that the key to seeing God is having a pure heart. And the next part of Psalm 24 echoes what Jesus said

Psalm 24:3-4

3Who may ascend the mountain of the Lord?

Who may stand in his holy place?

4The one who has clean hands and a pure heart,
who has not appealed to what is false,
and who has not sworn deceitfully.

If we want to be where God is... a pure heart is a must! To be pure in heart means to be singularly focused on God. The imagery of ascending the mountain of the Lord evokes a sense of reverence and awe. In ancient Israel the Lord's presence was encountered at the temple in Jerusalem. In the old covenant drawing near to God required a physical relocation. It required Moses to ascend Mount Sinai to meet with the Lord. And, later, it was necessary for the Israelites to make a pilgrimage to the temple in Jerusalem. Throughout the Old Testament, communion with God was an external activity. Some Christians still hold this mindset. They attempt to draw nearer to God through external experiences of elation. And some Christian leaders try to attract followers by constructing bigger and better "temples." In the New Testament, however, we discover an important redefinition of the pilgrim's journey. We no longer encounter God through any external journey, but an internal one. He does not dwell on a certain mountaintop... or in a particular building. Paul makes clear when he compared the old covenant with the new one in Christ.

2 Corinthians 3:12-18

12Since, then, we have such a hope, we act with great boldness. 13We are not like Moses, who used to put a veil over his face to prevent the Israelites from gazing steadily until the end of the glory of what was being set aside, 14but their minds were hardened. For to this day, at the reading of the old covenant, the same veil remains; it is not lifted, because it is set aside only in Christ. 15Yet still today, whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their hearts, 16but whenever a person turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. 17Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. 18We all, with unveiled faces, are looking as in a mirror at the glory of the Lord and are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory; this is from the Lord who is the Spirit.

We now encounter God through the presence of his Holy Spirit within us. In a stunning change from the Old Testament... we are now God's temple. So, our pilgrimage to commune with God is no longer an external journey to a city or up a mountain. In fact, it isn't doesn't even require a visit to a church building on Sunday morning. Instead, it requires solitude, quietness, and a willingness to travel inward to the unexplored sanctuaries of our soul.

So if we're always able to be in God's presence... the psalmist asks a vital question: Who is worthy to stand in the presence of the Holy One? The answer can't be who sits in these seats on a Sunday the most. The answer isn't who can sing the most Elevation, Hillsong or Bethel songs. The answer isn't based on outward appearances. The answer is based on the condition of your heart. Clean hands and a pure heart symbolize a life lived in righteousness and integrity. It is a call to authenticity. To live without the contamination of idols and false gods.

To stand in "God's holy place". We must put aside anything that competes for our devotion and focus on Him alone. We can't "appeal to what is false" or in other words, draw our strength from anything, or anyone, but God. If we draw our strength from anything other than God. That thing becomes an idol. Your phone, might be an idol. Your job, might be an idol. Your favourite news anchor, or podcaster might be an idol. Your gym gains might be an idol. Your diet might be an idol. Facebook, Instagram... I'd include twitter, but Elon Musk ruined that platform. Social media might be an idol. Your car might be an idol. Your house might be an idol. Your family might be an idol. I'm not saying these are bad things. But if they take the place of God, being FIRST in your life, they're an idol. If we want to seek the face of God... we must live our lives focused on Him... with a pure heart.

Psalm 51:10

God, create a clean heart for me
and renew a steadfast spirit within me.

I think more often than we're willing to admit, we relate to a verse like this. We know our heart isn't as clean as it should. And so we beg God for a renewed steadfast spirit. But what can start to happen is that we think we're too far from God. Or that our hearts that are too dirty to ever be purified again. This is not true! If we want purified hearts, all we have to do is surrender to God and ask Him to make our hearts new again. When we repent and walk toward God, He will always embrace us with open arms. He wants to be found by us even more than we want to find Him! A surrendered heart... is a pure heart. When our hearts are truly surrendered to God and His purposes, nothing will stand between us and Him. Lay your idols at the feet of Jesus and ask Him to purify your heart.

3. Blessings From The Lord

Maybe some of you today might feel like you're doing the pure and godly life thing already. But feel like there's something missing. It feels like God doesn't see you. Or it feels like He's not able to hear you. You might have said something like, "Why is God allowing my marriage to get to this?" Or, "Why is God allowing me to struggle through this health concern" God can

meet every need because He is the source that never runs out!

Psalm 24:5-6

5He will receive blessing from the Lord,
and righteousness from the God of his salvation.

6Such is the generation of those who inquire of him,
who seek the face of the God of Jacob.

The last portion of Psalm 24 we're going to use this morning makes it very clear that those who seek God will receive blessing from Him. Receiving blessing from God doesn't mean that we get everything we want. God provides in the same way that a good father provides what his kids need.

Taking my kids with me to the store is a perfect example of this. Retailers know to put the things kids want at their eye level. And so as we walk around the store I'm bombarded with questions, "Dad, can I get this?", "Oh Dad, look at this, can I have it?", "OHHH I've always wanted one of these". It would be irresponsible of me to just say yes blindly. Sometimes, with my life experience, and wisdom. I'm able to tell the toy they're begging me for will be broken within minutes of getting it home. Or all the pieces will be eaten by their little brother. Or the candy, or cookies will ruin dinner that night. A good father provides for their children. He loves, them, protects them, and wants what's best for them... Even if they don't agree with his decision every time.

When it comes to receiving blessings. We need to trust that God, the creator of everything knows more than us. And that He has a plan for our lives, no matter what we're going through.

I heard a great sermon a few weeks ago. The point of the sermon was that there's one Gospel that Jesus came and died to fulfill. And that Christ is enough, as He is. But sometimes we wish He was "enough" in different ways.

In Mark 8, Jesus was warning his disciples what was going to happen to Him. And Peter didn't like what he heard from Jesus. He didn't like the answer Jesus was giving him. Peter started rebuking Jesus for saying the things He was saying. And Jesus turns to Peter, and said, "Get behind me, Satan! You are not thinking about God's concerns but human concerns." Those are wild words to hear Jesus say to someone. But His point was that Peter was missing the point of why Jesus came to earth. Peter wanted Him to literally be "the all mighty one". He wanted Jesus to be the all-powerful ruler so His kingdom would overpower all the other nations.

Peter was co-opting the original plan Jesus had. Peter wasn't wrong, he just wasn't totally right either. I think sometimes we can be like Peter. We think more about our Human concerns than we do God's concerns. We trick ourselves into thinking Jesus died on the cross for your marriage. Or that Jesus died on the cross for our health. Or that Jesus died on the cross for our happiness. Christ died on the cross in your place so you can be made right with God. And when we're in relationship with God, and we're seeking His face, He will provide

what He knows we need. I think it's natural for us to seek what we think is the answer to our problems, first. It feels backwards to even tell you to seek God before you seek to meet your own needs. But when we are seeking God, we are seeking the One who can provide for us better than we could ever provide for ourselves. We're seeking help from the Creator of all things. The one who spoke it all into existence. Seeking God first requires solitude, quietness, and a willingness to uncover some of the areas we try to hold back from God.

When we seek the Creator, we begin to have a greater understanding of who we are as His creation. I want to challenge you: Ask God to show you who He created you to be. As you seek His face, you will find that everything else that seemed so important fades away. Maybe you're someone here today who has a hard time believing God could ever truly make our hearts new and pure again. I want to challenge you to: Lay down anything that you're putting above God in your life and ask Him to purify your heart. There is nothing you've ever done that is outside of God's ability to redeem! No matter what decisions you've made or how badly you've messed up, it's not too late to turn back to God. Are you seeking God and relying on Him to meet your needs or are you trying to carry the weight of the world by yourself? Choose to seek the face of God, and watch as He provides for you when you surrender your worries into His hands. He may not provide in the way you think He will, but He will never let you down. He wants us to seek Him, and He promises that when we seek Him, we will find Him.

The journey of seeking God's face is an invitation to intimacy, transformation, and a life lived in the very presence of our Creator. As we seek Him diligently, we are assured that we will find Him and experience the depth of His love and grace. May we be people who prioritize seeking God's face above all else, allowing His presence to shape us, guide us, and draw us ever closer to Him. To stand in the presence of the Holy One, we are called to live with clean hands and pure hearts. Let us be a generation that seeks the face of God, hungering for His transformative presence in our lives. In a world that often seeks glory in material possessions and temporary achievements, may we recognize that the ultimate glory lies in our relationship with the King of Glory.