

April 29, 2020
Wednesday Prayer Recording
The Presence and Face of God
Rev. Brian Yount

[RANGE Psalms] [KEY H6440] = 130

NRSV Analysis: (1) before = 47 (2) face = 32 (3) presence = 16 (4) because = 5 (5) countenance = 4

Examples:

*There are many who say, 'O that we might see some good! Let the light of your **face** shine on us, O Lord!' (4:6)*

*Lead me, O LORD, in your righteousness because of my enemies; make your way straight **before** me (5:8).*

*For the LORD is righteous; he loves righteous deeds; the upright shall behold his **face** (11:7).*

*You show me the path of life. In your **presence** there is fullness of joy; in your right hand are pleasures forevermore (16:11).*

*As for me, I shall behold your **face** in righteousness; when I awake I shall be satisfied, beholding your likeness (17:15).*

*You prepare a table **before** me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows (23:5).*

*"Come," my heart says, "seek his **face**!" Your **face**, LORD, do I seek (27:8, 9).*

*My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and behold the **face** of God? (42:2).*

*Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your heart **before** him; God is a refuge for us (62:8).*

*Restore us, O God; let your **face** shine, that we may be saved (80:3, 7).*

*Worship the LORD with gladness; come into his **presence** with singing (100:2).*

*Make your **face** shine upon your servant, and teach me your statutes (119:135).*

*Let my prayer be counted as incense **before** you, and the lifting up of my hands as an evening sacrifice (141:2).*

[RANGE Psalms] Face <WITHIN 2 Words > shine = 16x (4:6; 31:16; 67:1; 80:3, 7, 19; 104:15; 119:135)

Search: face [RANGE Epistles] = 22 (1 Cor. 13:12; 2 Cor. 3:7, 13; 4:6; 10:1; 11:20; Gal. 2:11; Col. 2:1; 1 Th. 2:17; 3:10; James 1:2; 1 Peter 3:12; 2 John 12; 3 John 14)

There is the simple request to see someone's face and be in their presence. Seeing someone face to face, wanting to be in their presence, isn't a simplistic thing. We *simply* want to be near someone we love and admire, but the reasons are not simplistic, are they?

The Psalms encourage us to pray simply, not simplistically. Simple prayers are not necessarily shallow prayers. Again, and again, as we read the Psalms, we hear requests asking to be in the presence of the Lord, to see His face. To behold the majesty, glory, and beauty of the Lord is an infinite pleasure and joy. It is anything but simplistic and shallow.

Let your requests and prayers be simple, knowing that your simple requests are wonderfully complex. To say that you want to be in God's presence, dwelling in His house, beholding his face in beauty, is so profound it will shape and mold your heart. It will affect how you live. You will grow up and mature and be a man or woman after God's own heart, and those people live lives of great purpose and meaning.

Good evening, and thank you for joining me as we continue praying through our separation. These weeks apart have led us into new habits and practices of communication, haven't they? We are utilizing all sorts of technology to get our work done and stay connected. We're doing a remarkable job to minimize our separation. And yet, we all feel the limits of our technology. We all recognize that there is something missing.

Throughout this period of separation, I've returned to a rather obscure Bible verse, 2 John 12. At the end of his short letter, John writes to the church, "**Although I have much to write to you, I would rather not use paper and ink; instead I hope to come to you and talk with you *face to face*, so that our joy may be complete.**"

Even though John wrote those words almost two thousand years ago, we all understand his point, don't we? We know that there is more joy seeing your friend, your loved one, your fellow church member face to face than communicating through paper and ink or Zoom or Facetime. I think that is why, as we read through the Psalms, we hear many requests to see God's face and be in His presence.

For example, Psalm 17:15, "As for me, I shall behold your face in righteousness; when I awake I shall be satisfied, beholding your likeness."

Or Psalm 27:8, "Come," my heart says, "seek his face!" Your face, LORD, do I seek.

Or Psalm 31:16, "Let your face shine upon your servant; save me in your steadfast love."

Or Psalm 42:2, "My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and behold the face of God?"

Or Psalm 105:4, "Seek the LORD and his strength; seek his presence continually."

Or Psalm 119:135, "Make your face shine upon your servant."

What I'm reminded of in all these verses is that we were not made for separation. We were made for fellowship, and when that fellowship is cutoff or limited our joy is incomplete. Like John, we all want to put the technology away and come together to talk face to face.

We miss one another. Our separation has limited our joy. But the Psalms show us that our ultimate longing is for the face of God. Our joy can only be completed when all of us are in the presence of God. And our hope, even as we endure these days apart, is that God hasn't left us separated. This what Paul was addressing when he told the Corinthian church, "It is God who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' who shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the *face of Jesus Christ*" (2 Corinthians 4:6).

Some days are harder than others. Some days make us feel the sting of our separation. But, we will not lose our hope, our joy, because God has spoken to us face to face. God hasn't left us with a broken fellowship. God has come to us, knowing we could never overcome the separation and distance. And so, let us this evening pray for those we long to see face to face. And let us pray for those whose joy remains incomplete that they may come to see the all-satisfying glory of God in the face of the Savior, our Lord Jesus Christ.

God of all grace,

In these days apart, we long to be together;
We prefer to see one another face to face,
knowing our joy is found in fellowship.

Hear us now, O Lord, as we pray for one another.
We ask for strength and endurance, patience and hope.

Grant each of us, O Lord, the eyes to see your glory in the face of Jesus.
May we know and enjoy and rest in the fellowship and friendship and love
that you have given to us in Your Son and through Your Spirit.

Hear us now, O Lord, as the people who long to see you
come before you in prayer.

Amen.