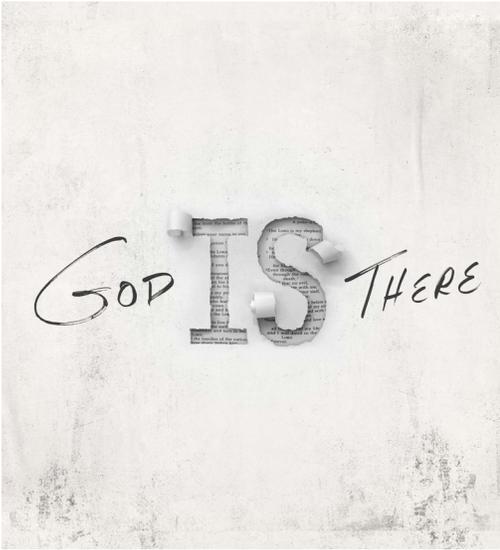




Sermon Growth Guide

August 6, 2023

The Lack Nothing Lifestyle



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God Is There - The Lack Nothing Lifestyle

Psalm 77

Key Verse: Psalm 23:1 “The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing.”

Big Idea: The Lack Nothing Lifestyle involves trusting that God has equipped you, transformed you, and protected you for all of life’s journeys.

Foundations

This week, we are closing our series, **God Is There**, by putting our faith into action by looking at a well-known psalm—Psalm 23.

It is one thing to go through life knowing that God is there; it is another to live our lives WITH the very Lord Almighty. It’s easy to say, that God is there for us through all of these moments and get the warm fuzzies inside. However, to respond in faith to the realities of knowing that God’s presence walks with and leads us is—quite frankly—easier said than done.

In this passage, we learn that the Great Shepherd is there for us all throughout our lives. He equips us for the journey, He transforms us along the way with His love and care, and He protects us in the midst of life’s darkest valleys.

In response to the Great Shepherd, we are called to walk with Him in this Lack Nothing Lifestyle. This involves a whole lot of trust and dependency in a culture that encourages the sheep to live independently from their Shepherd.

Understanding God’s Word

Together, read Psalm 23.

Was there anything that caught your attention differently this time around?

Applying God’s Word

Abi talks about four different postures that we might find ourselves in that take us away from a “Lack Nothing” lifestyle. Were there any that you related to?

How can we move toward a Lack Nothing Lifestyle?

When have you experienced fullness in your life?

What are ways in which you can experience the fullness of God’s presence this week?

Witnessing God’s Word

Think of someone who needs this comforting reminder of Psalm 23. Feel encouraged to call or text them pieces of Psalm 23 that relate to their lives.

GOD IS THERE • Psalm 23 • Abi Tovar • August 6, 2023

Good morning, church! My name is Abi Tovar and I am the Kids Ministry Director here at First Pres. It is such an honor to be standing before you. We are in the final week of our **God Is There** series. We have spent the last four weeks learning about how God is there for us when life isn't fair, when we are afraid, when we've made mistakes, and when we have been depressed. Next week, we will enter into a new series called **Lead Me Home** as we welcome our Lead Pastor Tim McConnell back from sabbatical. But, before we do so, we've got to wrap up some things this week. So without further ado...

It is one thing to go through life knowing that God is there. It is another to live our lives WITH the very Lord Almighty. It's easy to say that God is there for us through all of these moments and get the warm fuzzies inside. However, to respond in faith to the realities of knowing that God's presence walks with and leads us is, quite frankly, easier said than done. Larry Burtoft, in his introduction of Dallas Willard's book, *Life Without Lack*, explains how, "One of our greatest needs today is for people to really see and really believe the things they already profess to see and believe... When we truly believe what we profess, we are set to act as if it is true. Acting as if things are true means, in turn, that we live as if they were so."

There are many texts in the Bible that can function like this premise. We can see some passages and instantly think that we know what the text means just because we memorized it at home, in church, or in school for some sort of a prize. One of our summer camps for children involved performing a play about the importance of Scripture memorization. As an incentive, we had kids memorize Scripture during their snack/small group time for a sweet treat. When they rushed up to me to recite the verse, I would ask them if they believed the very words they recited to me. They often would respond with blank, stunned faces and would turn around to reflect on the very verses they learned.

If we aren't careful, church we can lose the theological implications of famous biblical passages due to familiarity. Today, I bring before you a passage of Scripture that we all know and love, and invite us to open our hearts and minds in a new way today to see how we are to live in light of knowing that **God Is There**. I call this the "Lack Nothing Lifestyle." Would you open your Bibles or your biblical devices to Psalm 23? And as we do so, let us pause and pray to our Good Shepherd today...

Part 1: Intro, Point 1, Verses 1-2

Psalm 23

A Psalm of David.

The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing.
He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters.
He refreshes my soul. He guides me along the right paths for his name's sake.
Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.
You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.
Surely your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

As we have read from the Holy Scriptures, this psalm is a Psalm of David, written from his life and experiences. Some scholars think that this psalm was either written right after he found rest from his enemies, or written later in his life, as he is reflecting back on his life's journey. Either way, what is important to note is how personal this image of the Shepherd is to his life. David was a shepherd himself in his younger years, therefore each image that he uses bears personal weight to it. This psalm is also a psalm of trust in the Lord, one of the six we find in the whole book of psalms. Typically, Psalm 23 has been used as a psalm of comfort for those who are nearing death; however, as we will come to find, this psalm applies to all of life.

As we have learned about God's presence in our lives through various times of trouble, we can find through this Holy Scripture that in light of knowing that our Good Shepherd is there, we can respond in three ways: First, we can live the "Lack Nothing" lifestyle by trusting that God has equipped us for the journey. Psalm 23:1 "The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing."

In the Ancient Near East, both kings and gods were portrayed as shepherds of their people. Their subjects were compared as sheep, meaning they, like sheep, were totally dependent on their shepherd for care and protection. Therefore, being a shepherd is more than simply a pastoral thing; it is also royal. God is our royal shepherd who cares for His people.

Additionally, W. Phillip Keller in his book, *A Shepherd's look at Psalm 23*, comments how... "The lot of life of any particular sheep depended on the type of man who owned it. Some men were gentle, kind, intelligent, brave, and selfless in their devotion to their stock. Under one man, sheep would struggle, starve,

GOD IS THERE • Psalm 23 • Abi Tovar • August 6, 2023

and suffer endless hardship. In another's care, they would flourish and thrive contentedly. If the Lord is my Shepherd, I should know something of His character and understand something about his ability."

The second part of this verse says that because of this, we lack nothing. Augustine, in his commentary on the psalms, says that "if you say 'The Lord is my shepherd' no proper grounds are left for yourself!"

Dallas Willard, in his book *Life Without Lack*, adds, "In other words, I'm in the care of someone else. I'm not the one in charge. I've taken my kingdom and surrendered it to the kingdom of God. I am living the with-God life. The Lord is my shepherd. And what follows from that? I shall not want. That's the natural result. I shall not lack anything. That's what Jesus teaches: 'Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness,' and everything else will be added."

Now let me add that just because we say, "I lack nothing," it does not mean that we will ever be deficient. It does not mean that life will be all rainbows and roses. What it does mean is that every area of his life is under His direction, protection, and control. You will find that this psalm frames itself around this verse 1. The subsequent verses either talk about the care of the Shepherd or the effects of that care on the lives of the sheep. I encourage you to start looking at which category the following verses fall into. Let's continue in verse two...

Verse 2: "He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters." What a nice picture. You know we have a picture drawn from Bob Simpich reflecting on Psalm 23. You can see it in the Commons after service. While this is an incredibly beautiful picture, the artist, like the psalmist, is trying to do more than just provoke warm fuzzies. There is more to this imagery than we realize. Notice how in this verse, the Great Shepherd "makes one lie down in green pastures." We are still talking about sheep here. What do green pastures mean for sheep? Well, it means good food. Green pastures are like a great steak dinner. What on earth are sheep doing lying down when they've got a delicious steak dinner right in front of them??? Sheep lie down in green pastures because they have already eaten their full. They already have what they need. When we trust that the Lord is our shepherd, we lack nothing. Therefore we are able to lie down in green pastures.

Now, still water provides a different picture.

Sheep have a deathly fear of moving water. This fear is so bad that it keeps them from the very thing that is supposed to refresh their soul. As a response, the Great Shepherd is able to both find still waters, but more often than not still the rushing waters in our lives. He is a God that plans to protect us in the midst of moments that cause us to be stunned with fear.

We know that when God is there for us, just like a shepherd is there for his sheep, we can trust in His provision and direction, both in life's abundant moments and in moments of fear. This brings us to point number two...

Point 2: Verses 3-4

Secondly, the "Lack Nothing" lifestyle means that we trust that God has renewed us.

Verse 3: Psalm 23:3 "He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake."

We have seen images of sheep losing their way a couple of times in the Bible. We see this in the New Testament where Jesus leaves the 99 for the one sheep that loses their way. You see good shepherds will go after their sheep time and time again to restore it to the flock. Again, this makes us feel those warm fuzzies inside, but we often forget the path back to redemption. Sometimes if a sheep's wandering becomes a pattern, the shepherd may eventually break the sheep's legs. He will then make a splint for the broken leg, but the sheep is still helpless, so the shepherd will then carry the sheep close to his heart until the sheep's legs heal. Just as the sheep when we stray, God our shepherd seeks us out and brings us back to Himself, doing whatever it takes to restore us."

Additionally, God guides us on the right paths. The effect of a restored soul is that we walk now in paths of righteousness as we walk in these paths. Again, knowing and trusting that the Lord is leading us on the right paths. This doesn't mean that God provides us with a life full of abundant blessings.

Verse 4: Psalm 23:4 "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me." Rod is a wooden club that was used to defend the flock against attacking animals both near and far. Staff was bent at one end and the shepherd used this tool to restrain the sheep from wandering, hook the sheep legs to pull them out of holes, or pull back branches that sheep can become entangled in. These are tools of power and protection. These are tools with which we are guided with on our life

journey. The word comfort here means more than just consoling fearful one, it has more of a connotation of strengthening oneself. We can find a strength that our shepherd is mighty in his protection and provision.

Point 3: Verse 5-6

Finally, The “Lack Nothing Lifestyle” means trusting that God has protected us.

Verse 5: Psalm 23:5 “You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.”

Some scholars go back and forth on whether or not this image of God being our Shepherd shifts into a new image of God as a Host. Our western mindsets might guide us toward that direction. However, scholar Haddon Robinson talks about a unique experience of shepherding. He says this: “When a shepherd enters a new field where he can feed his flock, he walks up and down...looking for grass that might poison the sheep. He also searches for vipers. A shepherd protects the sheep in two ways. When he finds the vipers’ holes, he takes a bottle of thick oil from his girdle; then, raking over any long grass with his staff, he pours a circle of oil at the top of every viper’s hole he can find. The oil traps the vipers in their hole. Secondly, he leads the sheep into the field, he anoints the head of each animal with the oil. This oil acts as a repellent and “shoo’s” away irritants. Literally, therefore, the sheep graze in the presence of their enemies.”

My cup overflows: The word here “overflows” in the Greek translation of the text connotes a fullness of satisfaction. Almost to the point of intoxication. My cup overflows with everything that I need for life’s journey. I lack nothing. It’s the “Lack Nothing Lifestyle.” It begins by trusting that God has equipped you, transformed you, and protected you.

Application

So, now that we know what the “Lack Nothing Lifestyle” entails, how do we live this out? Well, a key component of this lifestyle entails living a life with God, in step with His spirit and direction. Right? In Skye Jethani’s book, *With: Reimagining the Way You Relate to God*, he addresses four postures in which we can find ourselves in our journey with the Great Shepherd. I want you to take note of which posture you are tempted to fall into.

First, there is the “Life Under God” posture. This posture involves treating life like a checklist that if I do my part, if I check off all my boxes, God needs to do His part to bless me. This posture thinks that this world is a dangerous and uncontrollable place in which

the best way to gain control over this world is by trying to gain control of God.

Secondly, there is the “Life Over God” posture. This posture assumes that you just don’t need God at all! God simply sets the world into motion and then sits back and relaxes. People in this view might try to control their understanding of this world through science or philosophy to try to gain control.

Third, there is the “Life For God” posture. This posture believes that what matters most in this life is what you can accomplish for God. This posture is motivated by fear of living an insignificant life. If I were to share which one I wrestle with, this one is definitely the one for me.

Finally, there is the “Life From God” posture. This posture operates life like a transaction between God and man. God is one dimensional in this view. He exists to meet our needs. And when we don’t think He is anymore, we drop Him.

All of these postures are living a life of “lack” in some way, shape or form. Our response to each of these postures should be to move toward living a lack-nothing lifestyle, walking with our Great Shepherd. Walking with Him first involves knowing about Him, and then trusting Him through all of life’s journeys.

We conclude Psalm 23:6: “surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.”

As Dallas Willard puts it: “This is a description of the eternal life available to us now in the kingdom of the heavens; the abundant with-God life that comes from following the Shepherd, where we dwell and abide with God in the fullness of His life. We can find and experience the fullness of living with our Great Shepherd here today by experiencing the lack-for-nothing lifestyle. It’s better than any other self-help strategy or feel-good book.

Psalm 23 is more than just an expression of how lovely a life with God can be. We see that rushing waters, dark valleys and enemies are still before us. But from this psalm, we can learn to trust in the Great Shepherd, to live in light of who He is and how He cares for us. Take heart, church. **God IS There!**