



SERMON RECAP: WHAT DID THE TEXT MEAN? WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

When we are overloaded in life, we must learn how to trust in the Lord and find ways to renew our souls.

What did you learn from this week's message that you'd like to share or discuss with the group?

WARM UP

How have you experienced God's blessing in your life this week? Be as specific as possible. How has he shown himself to be faithful to you regardless of circumstances?

THE TEXT: WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR ME?

Psalm 23:1 holds one of the most important truths we can ever learn about the Christian life. This passage sets the stage for the rest of the Psalm. This is a verse we would be wise to think deeply on today and every day.

The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I lack.

- In the Psalms, God is most often referred to as a rock, a shield, a king, and a deliverer. How is "shepherd" different than these other terms?

Each member should look up one of the passages below. Read it to the group and together answer the question: "What does each passage tell us about God?"

- John 10:11
- Isaiah 40:11
- 1 Peter 2:25
- Psalm 34:9-10
- Philippians 4:19
- Revelation 7:17

If all this is true, the only logical conclusion is: there is nothing that we lack if we have Christ! Nothing at all!

- Why then do you think we are so stressed out and busy all the time?

When we forget that God alone is our shepherd, we place our ultimate hopes on other people or things, and as a result, we feel continuously overloaded. We commit what the Bible calls idolatry. So often we think of sin as mainly doing bad things, but it runs much deeper. We have given ourselves to the wrong shepherds. Listen to Tim Keller's definition of sin:

"Sin isn't only doing bad things, it is more fundamentally making good things into ultimate things. Sin is building your life and meaning on anything, even a very good thing, more than on God. Whatever we build our life on will drive us and enslave us. Sin is primarily idolatry. If you add anything to Jesus as a requirement to being happy, that's your true king."

Break up into huddles of 3-4 and read through the two exercises below. Answer the questions in your huddle and then come back together with the entire group to pray.

Question #1: Who is your shepherd?

Read the following statements in your huddle from Tim Keller to help diagnose idolatry in your life:

1. If you center your life and identity on your spouse or partner, you will be emotionally dependent, jealous, and controlling. The other person's problems will be overwhelming to you.
 2. If you center your life and identity on your family and children, you will try to live your life through your children until they resent you or have no self of their own. At worst, you may abuse them when they displease you.
 3. If you center your life and identity on your work and career, you will be a driven workaholic and a boring, shallow person. At worst, you will lose family and friends and, if your career goes poorly, develop deep depression.
 4. If you center your life and identity on money and possessions, you'll be eaten up by worry or jealousy about money. You'll be willing to do unethical things to maintain your lifestyle, which will eventually blow up your life.
 5. If you center your life and identity on pleasure, gratification, and comfort, you will find yourself getting addicted to something. You will become chained to the "escape strategies" by which you avoid the hardness of life.
 6. If you center your life and identity on relationships and approval, you will be constantly overly hurt by criticism and thus always losing friends. You will fear confronting others and therefore will be a useless friend.
 7. If you center your life and identity on a "noble cause," you will divide the world into "good" and "bad" and demonize your opponents. Ironically, you will be controlled by your enemies. Without them, you have no purpose.
 8. If you center your life and identity on religion and morality, you will, if you are living up to your moral standards, be proud, self-righteous, and cruel. If you don't live up to your moral standards, your guilt will be utterly devastating.
- Which one of these idols (or other) compete most strongly with your relationship with God? In other words, what good thing do you tend to make an ultimate thing at times?
 - What truths about Jesus make him a better "center" for your life?

Question #2: Where are you feeding?

**He lets me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside quiet waters.
He renews my life; He leads me along the right paths for His name's sake.**

If you want to remove an idol, you must change where you feed. Psalm 1 says that the happy person delights in the Word of the Lord, and he meditates on it day and night. God gives us the "green pastures" of his Word so that we can feed, be nourished, and satisfied.

- If you look at the past month, how much nourishment have you been gaining from God's Word?
- What are some specific ways that your love for Christ has been renewed (or faded) as a result?
- What would you have to say "NO" to so you can say "YES" to feeding daily on God's Word?

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- If you are feeding daily on God's Word, who is someone that you could invite to join you to begin discipling them?

Come back together as a large group and have each person share one insight for action in the coming week.

Close by praying for each other as a group.

DIGGING DEEPER

A great way to get to know your "shepherd" better and to practice "feeding in green pastures" is to start a Fight Club or Become Group with 2-3 other men or women in your LifeGroup. You can meet anytime weekly or bi-weekly at any place (coffee shop, park, home, etc.). Saying "Yes" to this and "No" to something else just might change your life!

Get more information here:

<http://rushcreek.org/ministries/men/fight-clubs/>

<http://rushcreek.org/ministries/ladies/become-groups/>

CLOSING THOUGHT

In the gospel, there is included ALL that the heart of men could ever want. (J. Gresham Machen)

If you uproot an idol in your life and fail to plant the love of Christ in its place, the idol will grow back. (Tim Keller)

- Spend time meditating and journaling on the deep promises of the gospel this week as you work to memorize Psalm 23.