

Life In 110 Words

On Sunday we continued our sermon series called “Eight **EPIC** Bible Passages.” Tonight we’ll talk about the third epic passage – Psalm 23.

1. Warm up question: If you had the opportunity to spend an hour getting to know any famous person alive today, who would you choose – and why?
2. If having face time with a famous person would be awesome, having face time with God would be many-times more so. Until that happens, though, our next best option is to learn about God from the saints of past and present who’ve had the deepest, most-meaningful relationships with God. Let’s start with the present. Think about the most saintly person you’ve known. What did you learn about God from the example of that person?
3. King David is one of the great saints of the past from whom we can learn about God. David’s most famous spiritual teaching is found in a song he wrote, known to us as “Psalm 23.” David’s song shares his insights about what God is like, how God feels about us, and what we should expect from life. The key insight in David’s song is stated in his first line, “The Lord is my shepherd.” Though most of us have never met a real-life shepherd, Jeff suggested two ways for us to explore what David meant.
 - a. First let’s read a parable told by the Prophet Nathan that gives us a glimpse into the heart of a good shepherd. Nathan told this parable to David to help him see that he had been a bad shepherd to his own people. Read II Samuel 12:1-9.
 - b. The poor man in Nathan’s parable represents the heart of a good shepherd. Verse 3 describes the poor man’s relationships with his little lamb. Based on what’s said there, what words would you use to describe how do you think the poor man felt about his little lamb?
 - c. How do you think the poor man felt when his little lamb went missing? How do you think he felt when he discovered what happened to his little lamb?
 - d. In your heart of hearts, do you think God feels the same way about you?
4. The poor man in Nathan’s parable interacted with his little lamb the same way we interact with beloved pets. Historians tell us that ancient shepherds frequently became very attached to their sheep, giving them names, delighting in their personalities. So our pets provide another way for us to under what it means to say, “The Lord is my shepherd.”
 - a. Tell us about a beloved pet you’ve had. How did you feel about that pet?
 - b. When your beloved pet did something wrong, how did you feel about him/her?
 - c. When your beloved pet suffered, how did you feel?

- d. Why is it so hard for us sometimes to believe God feels the same way about us?
5. Read John 10:1-11. What does each of the following verses teach us about a good shepherd?
Verse 3 – Verse 10 – Verse 11
6. After laying down his basic premise – that God relates to us like a Good Shepherd – David devotes the rest of his song to explaining what that means for our lives, in three simple stanzas that illustrate key phases of life. **Phase One = Green Pastures.** Verse 2 says, “You make me to lie down in green pastures. You lead me beside still waters. You restore my soul.” This is a reference to all the blessings God pours into our lives. Tell us about a “green pasture” experience (or season) in your life, for which you give great thanks to God, your Shepherd.
7. Of course, we all know that life is more than “green pastures.” The remaining two stanzas of David’s song deal with the nitty-gritty of life. **Phase Two = Times of War.** Verse 5 says, “You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.”
- a. Jeff invited us to imagine the scene painted by David’s words. Imagine God’s angels serving you a fine dinner at a table set up in the midst of a field filled with warriors, chariots, and horses doing battle, fighting fiercely to break through a protective line to destroy you. Let’s imagine it together. What are some of the foods the angels would be serving at your fine dining experience?
- b. Who are the “enemies” in your life right now trying to break through and destroy?
- c. Are you feasting in peace in the presence of your enemies, confident your Shepherd is protecting and that nothing will touch you that shouldn’t?
8. The last stanza of David’s song deals with death. Every sheep, no matter how loved, eventually has to journey through the dark valley passageway that leads from this life to the next. **Phase Three = The Valley of the Shadow of Death.** “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.” The promise of this verse is that, even in death, our Good Shepherd will be there to comfort and guide us to the other side, so that even death itself can be filled with beauty.
- a. Do you ever think much about your own death? If so, what do you find yourself thinking?
- b. Jeff told a true story of a man dying of cancer who still found powerful meaning in his last days. The man quoted E.E. Cummings line, “I thank you God for this most amazing day.” What do you think it takes for us to get to that place where even death can be a beautiful part of our journey?