

“I Lack Nothing”

Last Sermon by the Rev. Marsha E. Brown,

Pastor at New Horizons Presbyterian Church, Overland, MO

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PSALM 23:

FOCUS: God gives us all we need.

FUNCTIONS: Help us all to realize this every day, for this is a concept that saves us here and now!

Psalm 23 is really familiar to most of us. Probably many here have it memorized. And that is great—it can come in handy when you have a need for comfort and presence of God. But sometimes when we are very familiar with a passage, we don't really hear it. Today I am going to read from the Common English Bible which is a new translation from the original Hebrew. It caught my attention and I imagine that it will catch yours. Listen for what jumps out at you or what images the words bring forth. I am going to read it twice with a pause in-between. Listen for God's Word to you in Psalm 23.

“The Lord is my Shepherd. I lack nothing. He lets me rest in grassy meadows; he leads me to restful waters, he keeps me alive.

He guides me in proper paths for the sake of his good name.

Even when I walk through the darkest valley,

I fear no danger because you are with me.

Your rod and your staff—

They protect me.

You set a table for me
Right in front of my enemies.
You bathe my head in oil;
My cup is so full it spills over!
Yes, goodness and faithful love
Will pursue me all the days of my life,
And I will live in the Lord's house as long as I live.”

This is the Word of God. Thanks be to God.

Our world is one that tries to tell us that we need things to be happy. Sometimes it is hard to know where to stop with getting things. It can take over your life!

I went to see my sister's antique/resale shop last week and ended up helping her sort through big trunks of jewelry and stuff newspaper in about 50 pairs of used cowboy boots so they would look their best for sale in her shop across from the famous BBQ place in our little hometown in Central Texas. My head is still spinning from all the stuff she has in that huge peanut warehouse! How to manage it? how to account for it...to make it look its best for sale? How many Adirondack chairs are enough to have on hand for impulsive buyers? When is enough enough?

As we were sitting on the brightly colored benches that were also for sale, a customer/friend came in to chat with Karen. I was surprised when he invited us to a Buddhist chanting session that they have each week. You don't see too many Buddhists in Lexington Texas..... He told us that several gather weekly to chant a phrase that says they want more. I was

perplexed as I know that Buddhism is based on tenets of being at peace with what is-not desiring more. He told us that this phrase “Nam Myoho Rengen Kyo” are words that say ‘what I want’ so that they will not want anything. He said this group chants that phrase to let go of desire which is the bane of human life.

Everywhere we go we are reminded of what we lack. It can be overwhelming. As he was talking, I realized that what I have done in my years is simply to go backpacking every so often to realize how little I really needed in life.

We all need something that keeps us on track or else affluenza or consumerism or hoarding can come into play. We can find that we have no limits to what we may accumulate. So the 23 Psalm is one that reminds us also that we already have what we need-we just need to be reminded of it. But listen to how this is said, “I lack nothing”! Friday I was driving behind a car with the license plates that said “No Lack”- what a coincidence!

“I lack nothing.” Wow. That is a profound statement that I have rarely heard in my life. Usually, I have noticed, it comes from someone who I might judge to lack a lot of things. Kinda like a lot of the folks I see every day who shop for food in the pantry and when you ask them how they are, they smile and say, “I am blessed”.

That is the beauty of working with the poor. They bring a gift to all of us who struggle to pay for our big tvs and 8 piece matching dinner set. Folks who aren’t sure where their food is coming from have a different perspective than those who get to eat whatever they choose and spend money freely. We lose the present moment with our wanting, whereas they are content. They have what they need, or it will be provided for them in some way. Hope and faith are usually strong among those who have little material goods. It can be quite wonderful to get to see this on a regular basis.

This is wisdom. This is joy. This is heaven on earth-the kingdom of heaven that Jesus talked about.

Richard Rohr is a Franciscan priest in New Mexico that has a perspective on understanding how to live the way Jesus showed us that few grasp. He said, “God refuses to be known intellectually. God can only be loved and known in the act of love; God can only be experienced in communion with God. Jesus offers the world full and final participation in his own very holistic teaching. Jesus spoke of true union at all levels with oneself, with the neighbor, with the outsider, with the enemy, with nature, and—through all of these—with the Divine. He said, “we first came to understand the possibility of Full and Final Participation through Jesus, who clearly believed that God was not so much inviting us into a distant heaven, but inviting us into the Godself as friends and co-participants now.”

Church should not be about saying what we believe and doing nothing different with our lives! Our faith should be about seeking ways to be in union with God: quiet, meditation, walking a labyrinth, spending time in nature- in short listening for God with us as Psalm 23 describes.

God wants to be in union with us. When we realize that we do not need, that we do not lack, we can relax and realize what we have. We are beloved. We are forgiven. We are grace filled from our first breath to our last. We belong to God and nothing can take us away from God. And we are called to give that message to others-AND to receive that message from others. Sharing the peace of Christ in practical ways with all those we meet is part of being a follower of Jesus.

My prayer for you all as we part ways today, is that you know this deep down in your soul.....

-That you do not doubt your worth to God.....

-That you do not hesitate to become aware of God's continual coming to you in moments of your life-sometimes that you least expect.

-Being aware of God and the Spirit in your life is lovely and life itself.

I will leave you with words that Sara Seidler quoted in her personal journal that I read at her service last fall. The author is Richard Jeffries from 1883, *The Story of My Heart*”:

“It is eternity now

I am in the midst of it

It is about me in the sunshine;

I am in it as the butterfly in the light laden air. Nothing has to come, it is now.

Now is eternity, now is eternal life.”

When we seek God and serve God, we have this awareness. May you have this kind of life!

Always. Amen.