

SALT CO
9.8.2024
Living the Psalm 23 Kind of Life

WELCOME TO THE SALT CO!

We are so glad you are here!

Special welcome to my friend and our Teaching Pastor, Brian Howard.

This is the HUB of Seasoned Adult Ministry. For anyone new...by SEASONED ADULTS we mean:

SEASONED AS IN...

Chronologically-- we've lived a lot of seasons of life

BUT more importantly-

Spiritually--- ...like when sodium and chlorine combined make SALT... by the grace of God, when we receive Christ into our lives we become like THIS [gesture: one hand—two hands—joined together]

We become something beautiful, a *new creation*...transformed and *transforming* for the rest of our lives.

JESUS CALLS US THE SALT OF THE EARTH.

Life with a purpose.

So, this is the SALT CO **where** we pull off the road to **gather**, AND share stories about **how to faithfully navigate** the ever-changing terrain on Route 60+; and Route 60++...and +++...

A place where we re-tool, re-fuel and re-charge.

Where we can celebrate.

-To that end, who has a September birthday or anniversary? Hands up!

Congratulations! Let's give a round of applause...Keep it goin'!!

Let's rejoice and be glad!

God is good! This is the day the Lord has made.

If you know this little song, join me in singing...it's short and sweet...let's sing through it 2 times together:

NOT DOING THE SONG THIS TIME!

*Rejoice in the Lord always
Again I say REJOICE!
Rejoice in the Lord always,
Again I say, REJOICE*

*REJOICE, REJOICE
Again I say REJOICE*

*Rejoice in the Lord always,
Again I say, REJOICE!*

Before we dive into the theme for our gatherings this FALL-it's been a while since we've been together. Let's take some time to touch base with the folks around your tables...our table guides will get you started with some conversation questions for the next 5-10 minutes:

TABLE TALK I (10 minutes)

1. Share your name. How long have you been coming to Calvary?
2. As you look back over your summer, share a "high; a low or a "white rhino" kind of experience you've had.

Explain that a White Rhino means something surprising in a good or tricky or weird or just plain UNEXPECTED kind of way

You can share just ONE if you want; (high/low/ or a white rhino)
But pick just one for our first round around the table.

If time we can each have a chance to share second one.

Maybe we'll have enough time left for anyone who wants to share a third time and we'll get through all 3!

NOTE this conversation prompt can be fun for family dinners or when you have friends over.

This season, we are going to address the question how can we **refresh, retool and refuel** for the ever-changing terrain on Route 60+?

We are going to explore what it would mean to learn to live a Psalm 23 kind of life!

Psalm 23, most well-known of the psalms. Did you know that this Psalm is most often associated with funerals??!!

Which is IRONIC...because... the 23rd Psalm is actually describing a kind of LIFE! Rich, deep, full, meaningful, purposeful, hope filled LIFE.

One of our challenges is that many of us are too familiar with it. We went over this when we were kids in Sunday School. "I know this. I committed it to memory a long time ago... I might even be able to piece it together and recite today!".

But I want to invite you to join me on a sort of "expedition" into the terrain this psalm opens for us.

To do this well we're going to get some help from an able guide.

Have a look at this short intro video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3ZkKoNVrsdU>

Not required reading but *recommended*! There's a copy on your tables you can flip through. Twelve bucks in the cup if you want to pick it up. Also have them in the bookstore.

We thought the Sierra cups on the tables could be a way to depict just one aspect of what the Lord invites us to experience in living a psalm 23 kind of life. What is it like? It's like a cup of cold mountain spring water.

We put these Sierra cups on top of 2 books:

You can see one is wrapped in a map because we will be navigating some new terrain together. The other, as I mentioned, is our guide, Life Without Lack, which has eight chapters.

1. There's no way we can see everything there is to see in our next eight gatherings, so we'll stop at eight defining VISTA POINTS that will give us a good orientation to this beautiful terrain.
2. Every SALT CO will stand alone, always welcoming new folks, don't have to have "done the homework".
3. Our hope, by the time we conclude in December, many SALT CO folks will not only have "committed the Shepherd's Psalm to memory", but they that we will "know it by heart".

To get started let's pray the prayer Dallas Willard used:

*Lord Jesus Christ,
We are so thankful to you that you have said,
"Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure
to give you the kingdom."
We are thankful for the ease with which you walked upon this earth,
the generosity and kindness you showed to people,
the devotion with which you cared for those
who were out of the way and in trouble,
the extent to which you even loved your enemies
and laid down your life for them.*

*We are so thankful to believe that this is a life for us,
a life without lack, a life of sufficiency.
It's so clear in you, the sufficiency of your Father
and the fullness of life that was poured through you,
and we're so thankful that you have promised that same love,
that same life, that same joy, that same power for us.*

*Lord, slip up on us today.
Get past our defenses, our worries, our concerns.
Gently open our souls and speak your Word into them.
We believe you want to do it,
and we wait for you to do it now.
In your name, amen.*

(Life Without Lack, p. xiii)

The title Life Without Lack reflects the first verse, ***“The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want...”*** This is the life we all want and desire.

Is this possible?

We all have this question, don't we? I was attending a conference with Dr. Curt Thompson where I shared with him my sense of so many things to do, so many ways folks need help. He listened. He smiled and said, simply, *“God is not hurting for time...”* Right? What help will I be to how God wants to work through me if I'm all wrapped around my own axel?

Over the next eight SALT CO's we'll seek to help every one of us really see how this is possible, how we can trust that this is real.

Today we begin with ***“The Lord is my shepherd...”***

Who is the Lord? Can you and I trust the Lord? Willard puts it like this,

“I believe that one of the reasons we resist fully surrendering our lives to God is the fear that he might allow desolation in our lives.” (p. xxi)

We are going to get help in our struggle with doubts about God's plentiful provision. The vision of a “life without lack” is a life in which we are completely satisfied and sustained, *no matter what happens.*

Listen to these words. I'm reading from Psalm 103:1-5:

***Bless the Lord, O my soul,
And all that is in me,
Bless his holy name.***

***Bless the Lord, O my soul,
 And do not forget his benefits-
 who forgives all your iniquity,
 Who heals all your diseases,
 who redeems your life from the Pit,
 Who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy,
 who satisfies you with good as long as you live
 so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.***

How is it possible to live this kind of life? What is our part?

The key is found in the great gift God has given each one of us, the gift of our *minds*- what we think with, what we use to “pay attention”.

In the Bible, our spirit, heart and soul are intimately related to our minds. Our minds are how we pay attention and are aware of things.

You and I can turn toward God with our thoughts.

-So Psalm 119.

-The apostle Paul in numerous scriptures; also refers to our minds as the key to living in the presence of God.

With our minds we have and hold ideas. We could call ideas “belief systems” that we use as the basis for our decisions and actions, and these in turn determine the direction of our lives.

Example: used in the video we showed last weekend here at CCC. We don't use the word “seniors” because there is a set of beliefs that become “expectations”, like a “script” that goes along with believing, seeing oneself as a “senior”. We could spend time talking about the pictures in your mind and mine that pop up when I say “senior citizen”.

The research is in on what happens when we buy into the generally negative “seniors stereotype”.

Dr. Becca Levy, professor of epidemiology and psychology at Yale in her book Breaking the Age Code: How Beliefs About Aging Determine How Long & Well You Live discovered that “*Participants with the most-positive*

views of aging were living, on average, seven and a half years longer than those with the most negative views.” (p. 93)

In Seasoned Adults Ministry, based on who God is, and how God sees you and me in the third third, we want to challenge that script – that idea- and, based on who God is, that He is our shepherd, begin to have new pictures-new ideas- play in our minds about our age!!

God knows us better than we know ourselves. How we can get. The ideas that lead us to feeling hopeless, helpless, worthless. It's why He came, to draw our minds and our attention back to God! So, God came in real time, in a real place well documented and attested in history- read Matthew, Mark, Luke and John...

To bring “good news”. The gospel. Here is a very important “idea”:

What is the good news?

Take a look at this from the Bible Project. About 5 minutes...

<https://vimeo.com/158577435>

Your “idea” of what the Gospel is can change your life.

You are called, right where you are on Route 60+, to follow your Shepherd and participate in what HE is doing in His Kingdom work right now, right where you are all the days of your life. As Willard liked to say: “If you want to go to heaven—NOW is a good time.”

This, at our life stage is called the fine art of eldering” from which there is no retirement!

All of this, of course is rooted and grounded in who God is, the kind of God, God is.

He is the one we call our “shepherd”!

Willard focuses on who God is:

1. God is very, very BIG. Look what we can observe now through the Webb telescope scanning the heavens a million miles from the earth. Or what we can now see through our most powerful microscopes. Check this out!

(This is a composite image from NASA's Chandra X-ray Observatory and the James Webb Space Telescope. Pictured is the Orion Nebula, a giant cloud where stars are forming. Still located in the Milky Way galaxy, this region is a little bit farther from our home planet at about 1,500 light-years away.)

2. God is powerful, unlimited energy. The only One who is truly "self-sufficient". All creation came out of the person of God (p.14). Jesus demonstrated this with five loaves and two fish to feed thousands, and they picked up twelve bushels of leftovers!

Willard writes,

"When we make contact with God a flow of energy comes to us. That energy is directly the source from which Jesus worked, and we can know it by experience." (p. 14)

- a. One way to experience this is by fasting.
 - b. Talk about "gentle power". We can learn to notice His gentle power at work in surprising ways. (white rhinos!)
3. We see God in history. Here is just one of many ways God's word says this:

"In all history, going back to the time when God created man upon the earth, search from one end of the heavens to the other to see if you can find anything like this: ³³ An entire nation heard the voice of God speaking to it from fire, as you did, and lived! ³⁴ Where else will you ever find another example of God's removing a nation from its slavery by sending terrible plagues, mighty miracles, war, and terror? Yet that is what the Lord your God did for you in Egypt, right before your very eyes. ³⁵ He did these things so you would realize that Jehovah is God, and that there is no one else like him. ³⁶ He let you hear his voice instructing

you from heaven, and he let you see his great pillar of fire upon the earth; you even heard his words from the center of the fire.

Deuteronomy 4:32-36

- a. God enters in with us, involved in the messiness, into the muck, the haze, the blood, the drama of human history.

4. God is revealed in God's names

- a. *Elohim*- of great majesty, God of heavenly host
- b. *Adonai*- Lord, covenant maker and keeper
- c. *El Shaddai*- literally God of the mountains (high places), creator and power over all creation
- d. *Yahweh (YHWH)*- the sound of wind, breath, spirit, close, gentle power, mystery, LIFE. From the Hebrew verb HAYAH= "to be".
"I am because I am"= self-sufficient!

The point: when you and I pray with the 23rd psalm, "**The Lord is my shepherd...**" this is who the Lord is! The kind of Lord He is! The way our Lord rolls.

Let's talk about this.

TABLE TALK II (30 minutes).

*REMEMBER: These questions are invitations; not obligations

1. Your memories, associations with the 23rd psalm?
2. For Dallas, the way into the experience of Psalm 23 is our mind: "In his goodness, God has arranged things so we are able to use our minds to understand and enter into his glorious and plentiful kingdom." *How much confidence do you have in your mind- your ability to think and imagine and grasp the truth in general, and about God in particular? What has affected your confidence?*
3. What do you find yourself thinking about most of the time? What has been your experience in keeping God present in your mind?

4. How has your own understanding of the gospel affected the way you think about God and how you live your day-to-day life?
5. What are some steps you can take this week to set your mind on who God is?

WRAP UP

Read from Life Without Lack,

“Now please do not lose sight of the purpose of this book. I am pleading with you here to take upon yourself the task of making these realities about God a part of your mind, to understand that God is a certain kind of being; that he existed before the creation of the earth in all its plenitude. God is not now sitting off in some distant corner of the universe like a [here Willard alludes to the script I was talking about referring to “seniors”] neglected senior citizen in the cosmos, waiting to see if someone will pay any attention to him. He is surrounded by unlimited glorious beings that he made, who worship him and praise him.” (p. 19)

This week I invite you to be mulling on, turning your mind toward the Lord who is your shepherd.

Go outside! What does God who loves you, want to show you about you, about Him, and your life, and your purpose in the work of the gospel?

WALK THE TALK

1. Invite folks to gather around the CCC small group curriculum this fall.

Let's say the 23rd psalm together.

Psalm 23

***The Lord is my shepherd. I shall not lack.
He makes me lie down in green pastures.
He leads me beside still waters.
He restores my soul.***

He leads me in paths of righteousness for His name's sake.

Yea, 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.

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.

You anoint my head with oil.

My cup overflows.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

AMEN