

SALT CO

9/22/24

“Living in Mindfulness of Our Magnificent God”

“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.”

Psalm 23:1-3a

WELCOME TO THE SALT CO!

Welcome those who are joining us online.

We are so glad you are here!

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 the milestones like birthdays and anniversaries, but also the easy to overlook daily gifts in our lives:

Like waking up and remembering God is with us in each fresh new day;

And days when we get to gather—like this--face to face-in “glad to be together joy”. Remember glad to be together joy is that special fuel that our Lord designed our brains run on!

So let's celebrate by singing!

*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!*

Our theme this fall is, “Living a Psalm 23 Kind of Life”. What would that mean? How is this possible? We’re using as a guide Dallas Willard’s teaching compiled into a book by the title, Life Without Lack.

We’re recommending but not requiring this as reading for following along the next several SALT CO’s.

We have a copy on each table...if you’d like to browse thru it feel free. If you’d like to buy it—you can pick up a copy in the bookstore.

The other book wrapped in a map is a reminder that we are going to explore the terrain Psalm 23 opens up for us. We’ll be stopping at eight vistas (each chapter of Life Without Lack) along the way...

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.

Last time, we started with the first line: “***The LORD is my shepherd.***” At the first vista point we saw that living a “life without lack” requires us to first and foremost re-examine what we actually believe about who the Lord our God is. Because if our ideas (and our images and information) about God are too small, distorted or even outright wrong, we will never be able to trust God enough to live a 23rd Psalm kind of life believing we have everything we need; especially when we don't have everything we want. The rest of the Psalm might sound nice, but we won't be able to really live into the terrain it offers.

Today we come to a second Vista near the first. The chapter title for today reads, “Living in Mindfulness of Our Magnificent God”.

For reasons that I will explain in a moment, I'd like to add a subtitle to this, “*Living with Minds Blown Open by Our Wildly Weird, Holy and Magnificent God*”!

Because there are two interconnected terrains opening up before us that we all must navigate one way or another.

John Calvin (!) at the beginning of his Institutes of the Christian Religion, put it like this in explaining Christianity to the king of France: [Now I get to use my French...] He wrote,

“Toute la somme presque de notre sagesse, laquelle, a tout compter, merite d’etre reputée vraie et entière sagesse, est située en deux parties: c’est qu’en connaissant Dieu, chacun de nous aussi se connaisse. Au reste, bien qu’elles soient unies l’une a l’autre par beaucoup liens, il n’est pas toutefois aise a discerner laquelle va devant et produit l’autre.”

Jean Calvin, L’Institution Chretienne, Chapitre Premier

Translation:

“The sum of what we can count on as true wisdom is found in two parts: that in knowing God each of us also knows ourselves. Here’s the thing, even though these two parts are related to one another in

many ways, it is not easy to discern which goes first and helps produce the other.”

In other words,

To know God and to know oneself, and which comes first is a mystery...(2X)

Calvin got this. Knowing the Wonder of God and knowing the wonder of ourselves as human beings are intimately connected. The *more I learn* about God the more I come to learn about me! I think this takes time. A long time. I think this takes “seasons”. And so it goes. The more I learn and come to understand about me, the more I open to who it is that created me, my purpose, my worth. The more I get in touch with my own true humanity the more I feel an ache for God. Yes?

The 23rd psalm invites us into this terrain.

Recall that at our ***first vista point we paused to take in a great reminder from Willard that one of the greatest sources of freedom we have as human beings is the freedom to choose where we will direct (pay) our attention...***we get to decide to a large degree what we let our minds dwell on.

When we turn our minds toward God what happens? Willard puts it this way,

“The single most important thing to remember about God is his total unlikeness in his being from anything we can see.” (p. 26)

Here’s the issue: it is so easy, so tempting for us to begin with ourselves and imagine God is like us only bigger and better!

If we don’t begin with who God truly is (think of the names of God: God of Hosts, God Most High, God who is faithful and loving, God who cannot not be!) we risk domesticating our view of God for our purposes!

When God becomes “useful” we are in trouble.

(Check out the resources and the book by theologian Matthew Barrett, None Greater: The Undomesticated Attributes of God.)

Many thoughtful people believe our civilization is in what they call a “meta crisis”.

Among them is Iain McGilchrist, psychiatrist and neuroscience researcher authored the award-winning book The Master and His Emissary: The Divided Brain and the Making of the Western World.

https://www.amazon.com/Master-His-Emissary-Divided-Western/dp/0300245920/ref=asc_df_0300245920/?tag=hyprod-20&linkCode=df0&hvadid=693586740360&hvpos=&hvnetw=g&hvrnd=12016919768694310349&hvppone=&hvptwo=&hvqmt=&hvdev=c&hvdvcmidl=&hvlocint=&hvlocphy=9031174&hvtargid=pla-608745955631&pssc=1&mcid=181ead5da2923fdb1422e9fbb155d28

McGilchrist’s research asked why brains are divided into hemispheres? He found it’s because they are, in very broad terms, doing two different things. For example, with the left hemisphere of a bird’s brain it looks for a worm. At the same time, with its right hemisphere it must be aware of predators. These are quite different processes.

In humans the relationship between the left and right hemispheres is much more complex. Suffice to say the left hemisphere aids us in narrow focus in order to “grasp stuff” and manipulate it for our use. It prizes consistency and offers mechanistic solutions to problems. On its own the left hemisphere thinks it knows everything there is to know. It does not know what it does not know.

You can see how this might be a problem when it comes to what we believe about God! And ourselves!

McGilchrist makes the case, based on decades of work as a neuroscientist, psychiatrist and philosopher that in our western civilization over the past few hundred years we have come to heavily favor the left hemisphere of our brains to the great neglect of our right brains.

He writes,

“...it would appear to be a literal truth that, as a society, we are becoming more like individuals with right hemisphere deficits. Anecdotal evidence from the teaching profession suggests that between a quarter and a third of children aged as old as five to seven are now having to be taught how to read the human face, something that until recently would have been necessary only in the case of children with autism. And about a third of all children now have difficulty carrying out tasks that a decade ago virtually every child in a mainstream school would have been able to do easily- tasks that depend on sustained attention. Add to that research suggesting that young people today are less empathic than children thirty to forty years ago. If a neuropsychologist had to choose three things to characterize most clearly the function of the right hemisphere, they would most probably be the capacity to read the human face, the capacity to sustain vigilant attention, and the capacity to empathise.”
(p. xxii)

McGilchrist believes we are in a crisis. As he puts it,

“The left hemisphere is a wonderful servant, but a very poor master.”
(p. xxvi).

Psalm 23 invites you and me to see with our faithful imaginations a whole other way of life! It tells us a story about the Magnificent, awesome, wholly other, Holy (!) God who is with us!

Let me introduce you to Martin Shaw, an Irish storyteller and mythologist (myths are stories that convey truth). He's spent his life cultivating imagination, and wonder. Something happened as he explored the truth of Scripture.

He describes it like this,

“It's getting on three years since I realized I was a Christian. Eighteen months before I had emerged from a 101-day vigil in the forest with a barrage of experiences that didn't fit neatly into any negotiated category. Finally I figured out what must have happened.

This 'emerging' wasn't deriving from wry Lewisian apologetics, or church attendance or some kind of crack up in my personal life. I'd been doing fine, thank you very much. It came from the realm of the unruly, the irrational, even the miraculous. It came from the wild...

Shaw also sees there is a problem...

The gap between what Christ was on about and how we humans generally behave is so Grand Canyon huge it was surely always going to be an unwieldy and often terrifying ride trying to keep up with him. It would require a kind of nervous breakdown of conventional behavior.

We were- and often are- light years away from the kind of religious maturity he required. It's too much. And I think it's meant to be too much. But the challenge itself is not stale, not at all. Especially when it's Christ reaching down to drag this old degenerate to his feet again. This is the chivalric invitation. To expect more from ourselves.

Shaw continues,

"How is Yeshua telling us to live? Can we endure the hollowing starkness alongside the unbearable compassion and the world-turned-upside-down miracles? If this doesn't shake your house then do you even have Christianity? Do we need a massive, cultural detoxification?...

...We scramble around on a melting ice tip of modern ideas, while a vast and majestic Berg-of-Christ is just underneath. We could replace spiritual waters for religious depths. But we do have to dive. We have to take our shoes off and dive.

...We need this, some of us. We're half asleep."

Willard is trying to help us see that,

"What you don't see is more important than what you do see." (p. 26)

The left hemisphere is more focused on what we can see. The right hemisphere is inclined to what we cannot see.

This applies to you and me too. What is *invisible* about you? How about your thoughts, feelings, will. Science cannot seem to find your “soul”. Why is it we can decide, and to act, to create, to make things like apple pies, tend a garden, play music, fix a garbage disposal or add on a room?

The left hemisphere biased world wants to get us to see our worth and identity in terms of our bodies, how we look, how strong we are, how quick we are to grasp things, to get things done! What about when we get older? “*Well*”, the world says, “*You retire...*”

I visited a friend last week who has spent the summer in a hospital bed and the doctors tell him to have “patience”, that he’ll be there for many weeks more. The world would be telling him to give up: What kind of life is this?! But he said to me, “*I am so thankful for His strength in me. I am so glad how my trust in God has helped prepare me for this. I can’t imagine anyone going through this on their own...*”

It occurs to me, he’s living a Psalm 23 kind of life...

Willard writes,

“My objective here is to help you think about God, and to do so correctly in accord with the truth about the kind of being God is. I am also asking you to think about yourself and what kind of being you are.

Because,

“God is the kind of being who, if you will place yourself in his hands, in trust, will ensure that nothing can ever happen to you that will make you say, ‘I’m afraid,’ or ‘I don’t have enough’.” (P. 32)

Whatever you fear, whatever it is I fear, no matter what you and I fear, you and I can live without that fear. (2X)

This is not some mind game. There is no denying the presence of threat, of evil, of loss, or failure, of the unforeseen come crashing into our lives. This is not about feeling guilty about having fear. It's that what we fear, no matter what it is, is not greater than who God is, and His love. This is where the 23rd psalm brings us, through deep valleys of shadow, in the presence of evil, when we thirst and hunger, we are never apart from Him, his provision, protection, his filling us to overflowing.

I wonder, what if our fears became a prod to come to our Shepherd with our honest prayers for help?

This is why God came. Jesus is God on the planet to make it possible for us to have a life without fear, a life without lack!

Watch this Bible Project video.

<https://www.google.com/search?client=safari&rls=en&q=you+tube+bible+project+video+angel+of+the+lord&ie=UTF-8&oe=UTF-8#fpstate=ive&vld=cid:0e8c1629,vid:qgmf8bHayXw,st:0>

We are taking in the view from this vista. With a sweep of his hand Willard points out,

“God is so ‘other’ that he is literally ‘out of this world’ and should never be identified with any physical thing in this world. It is this total otherness, this holiness, this weirdness that make most people not want to get close to God. They want to have just enough of God to make their little train chug down the track, something to fix them up, a cosmic aspirin to help them get on with their own business. So when they see the light and smoke coming out from around the door and the walls shaking, they say to themselves, ‘Maybe this is a little too big. I don’t think this will fit into my plans.’” (p. 42)

Listen to the word of the Lord from Hebrews:

“You have not come to a mountain that can be touched and that is burning with fire; to darkness, gloom and storm; to a trumpet blast or to such a voice speaking words that those who heard it begged that no further word be spoken to them, because they

could not bear what was commanded: “If even an animal touches the mountain, it must be stoned to death.”^l The sight was so terrifying that Moses said, “I am trembling with fear.”

But you have come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the Judge of all, to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel...

...Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our “God is a consuming fire.”

HEBREWS 12:18-24 (29)

The more we place our minds on God’s greatness and self-sufficiency (‘beholding... the glory of the Lord’), the more we come to see ourselves in a new light, as being transformed from one degree of glory to another.”

Let’s talk about this.

TABLE TALK

1. Share your name. How long have you been coming to Calvary?
2. Can you think of a time in your life when a wrong idea about God adversely affected you and how you were living your life? How has your idea(s) about God changed as you’ve come to realize your ideas about Him were too small; limited or distorted?
3. What is it about our world and even ourselves that leads us to reduce our idea of God to something/someone like ourselves but just bigger and better; or so small we can’t really trust God with the hardest parts of our life?

4. What helps you encounter with awe and amazement your belief in God's "all-sufficiency in himself?"
5. What is it about Jesus, that is most helpful to you as you grapple with the fears that are most troubling to you at this time in your life?

One of the greatest accounts in Scripture of someone having their inadequate and distorted views about God shaken to the core is when God knocked Saul off his high horse. To know God, to know oneself. And Saul became Paul. He spent three years after he recovered his eyesight re-thinking his thinking about God and then about himself and a new life flowed from the re-thinking. So it's with great credibility he later wrote for OUR benefit..

"Be transformed by the renewing of your mind" (Romans 12:2).

This the key to a life without lack

Joni Eareckson Tada, a friend of Calvary, has lived as a quadriplegic for nearly sixty years. She writes in recent book, The Practice of the Presence of Jesus:

"Suffering has a way of heaving you beyond the shallows of life where your faith tends to feel ankle-deep. It casts you out into the fathomless depths of God, a place where Jesus is the only One who can touch bottom.

For more than a half century, at every age, my quadriplegia has taught me how to swim in the depths of God. I am not saying that I swim well. Sometimes I feel like I'm only dog-paddling. Other times I think I'll drown in the waves of pain that crash over me. But Jesus is always my rescuer. He is my anchor, and I cling tighter to him now than ever before. It's because I need him more.

Pain never lets up. It pushes you to limits where you nearly collapse. And sometimes you do. But pain has also melded my heart with my Savior's. I find comfort in the Man of Sorrows who is acquainted with grief (Isaiah 53:3); he is a better relief and rest than any pain medication.

And it is my pain that has forced a slower pace. I now see more in his Word. I see Jesus in small and great pleasures. I feel his delight in

everything from sun-dappled shadows on a lawn to those breathtaking moments when a wayward soul awakens to gospel truth. Everything means more to me now. Somehow, pain-and perhaps aging- has helped me appreciate life more.”

(pp.. xxix-xxx)

May that be true for us as we journey on...WITH Him shepherding us on the ever changing terrain before us. May His presence help you and me to go more and more boldly!

Here's a possible next step to walk this talk:

WALK THE TALK

1. DRIVE group on Christlike Compassion study with Bev Ingraham. See Mary by the coffee.
2. Check out books in the bookstore: Life Without Lack by Dallas Willard, The Practice of the Presence of Jesus by Joni Eareckson Tada

Let's say together the 23rd Psalm...

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.

BLESSING