

SALT CO
12/22/24

“All the Days of My Life”

“And I shall dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life.”
Psalms 23:6

WELCOME TO THE SALT CO!

Welcome those who are joining us online.

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.

And 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-fuel

Re-charge

And maybe even...*Re-tool*

Our theme this fall has been Living a Psalm 23 *kind of life*. We've been using for our guide the book by Dallas Willard, Life Without Lack. Today we conclude this adventure, or better, I should say we conclude the *introduction* to this adventure! Now Willard poses this question to us, "*What is our part in dwelling with the Lord and living our days in such a way that goodness and mercy follow us in our wake?*"

Willard concludes his robust description of a Psalm 23 kind of life with the suggestion that we apply what we've been learning and make plans to spend a day with Jesus.

After all, God is **with** us. This is the Christmas message.

Jesus is called ***Emmanuel!*** God with us! Our life without lack flows out of our relationship with Him! God wants to be with you and me. We hear in God's word, "***I will never leave you or forsake you***" (Hebrews 13:6). The last word in Matthew's Gospel is Jesus word to all His followers, "***I am with you always, even to the end of the age...***" (Matt. 28:20).

He is with us all along our way as we navigate the ever-changing terrain on Route 60 + (++).

But here's the thing. Willard, our guide, points out,

*"The only caveat is that God's promise is made to those who trust him, **who desire to be with Him and to be about His business**. It is important for us to understand **what his business is**, and especially to understand that it is not some exclusive category of 'ministry' that only a select group of seminary graduates can engage in."* (p. 187)

So, as the apostle advises us, "***Try to find out what is pleasing to the Lord.***" Eph. 5:10.

One day at a time. Every day.

On your Table Talk sheets you'll see in the final chapter of his book Willard gives us a kind of "planner" to help us prepare for a day with Jesus. You might want to make some notes for your plan...

SECTION 1: Preliminaries for Going on the Road with Jesus

We all know-If you are going on vacation, it really helps to make plans before you head out the door. You try to remember what to pack and check your reservations and maybe your tires!

Willard suggests that there are three essential preliminary considerations that will help us planning:

Preliminary 1: Determining Your Desire

We sometimes struggle to pull things together if we are ambivalent about committing to the journey! RIGHT?? Willard says: check in with your desire/motivation level: We can ask ourselves, *“Do I really want this?”*

Because...

“If God is going to be with us, we should expect that our lives will be extremely different from ordinary human life.” (p. 188)

We talked about the “faith of propriety” as religious faith that tends toward keeping God at a safe distance where we can go “see God” when we want to such as on Sunday mornings.

It is true that God reveals Godself, but in a way that allows him to be hidden to all but those who are *determined to find him*. *One can deny God*. This is how God has arranged things. If we do not want God in our lives we can ignore Him. God is “dismissible”.

The first preliminary is to determine your desire for spending the day with Jesus.

Preliminary 2: In a Mirror, Dimly

As we get ready to spend a day with Jesus we need to face two facts:

Fact 1: It is okay to be who you are wherever you are.

Willard writes,

“Indeed, we cannot be someone we are not, and we won’t find God’s blessing there anyway because God has yet to bless anyone except where they actually are.” (p. 190)

Jesus’ beatitudes express God’s blessing for people as they actually are in their real lives, in your real life and in mine.

Fact 2: What is true about you as a person is also true about your work.

Willard reminds us that whatever you do, unless you are doing something that is harmful to people, is good in God’s kingdom. Your work is good! As we say all the time in SALT CO, “***You are the salt of the earth...***”

What is your work? I’m not asking about what you do or did “for a living”, i.e. your career, but what you and I do in our everyday relationships to help, to solve, to contribute, to make better, to encourage, to create, to set something wrong right.

In other words, there is no retirement from this work!!

Preliminary 3: Deciding to Do It

To de-cide is to “cut away”. To say “yes” is to say “no”. To go one way is to not go another way. You and I do not “drift” into the Psalm 23 Kind of Life, of constant companionship with Jesus. We decide to enter into this relationship. Willard puts it like this, a decision is “*an inward resolve to whatever is necessary to bring something to pass.*” (p. 191)

SECTION 2: Preview of Things to Come

Willard encourages us to imagine what your day would look like with Jesus at your side- as He will be. He asks, “What would characterize such a day?”

Strength to please

Let’s get practical here:

-You may imagine that being with Jesus means you would never do anything wrong. That would be so wonderful. *But it is not required.* Far more important is that...

-You and I will learn a great deal about ourselves by paying attention to what happens if we are faced with a temptation to do something we believe is wrong, and we decide to do it. How will we handle that? He will help us!

-We will find strength to do the things that would please Him. So...

-We discover we really can become people who naturally obey his commandments.

And we wouldn't even have to be especially "perfect" to do that!

Strength you experience in this day with Jesus will be followed by a deep sense of joy and confidence

Joy and confidence

As we learned last year here in SALT CO, joy is a relational term that describes the experience of being "glad to be together" with others. We can expect to deepen our sense of being "glad to be together with Jesus" and with others as we go through this day with Jesus.

After all, Jesus intends for your joy to be full and complete. This is the announcement of the angel to the shepherds.

Loving thy neighbor

To be with Jesus is also to be aware of and glad to be *with* others. To be fully present to them, caring for them. When we are fully present, we are practicing C.A.K.E. (Some of you will recall this from Joy Switch- a fantastic resource, available in the bookstore!)

Curiosity
Appreciation
Kindness
Eye Contact

In your day with Jesus, expect a fresh awareness of those around you.

Tag, He's it!

When you are yoked to Jesus, it's not all up to you to make everything happen. Try to think of Jesus PULLING the load and you are pulling with him as you go through your day. He's in charge of the capital "O" OUTCOMES!

Point is, you're not "it". He is...

You will also notice that you have your own personal super-assistant!

Your own personal super-assistant

I call this the experience of "gentle power" at work that you cannot explain or account for any other way (other than by "coincidence"). You notice the synergy of the Holy Spirit in your efforts; $2+2=5$. His Spirit is PARAKLETOS, lit. called alongside you.

Introduce the bookmarks, READ the prayer offered by Dallas Willard for our experiencing His being alongside each one of us. Take this with you today!

Speaking and hearing

Expect a lot of communication between you and Him. A day with Jesus is a day of continuous conversation. In our day with Him we will learn to hear His voice.

Now we're ready to make our plan for our day with Jesus.

Section 3: The Plan

Our part includes making a plan like you would plan a day with friends.

So, start to plan *before* the day, not moment by moment (which is NOT the way to "plan"!)

The Day Begins... at Sundown

The biblical approach to the “day” begins as the sun sets, early evening, to remember and reflect on the day, to praise God for His presence and help. It’s a time to prepare for tomorrow. To sort out conflicts so that the sun does not go down on anger, so as to not carry anything unresolved into the night and sleep and into awakening. Then we can rest in faith...

Rest in faith

As our psalm prays, “***He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside still waters, he restores my soul...***”

In Psalm 3:4 David cries out to God, then he can lie down to sleep

Practically speaking, this may look like cutting down on screen time at night. Eating wisely, not overeating right before bed, or exercising late that gets us all revved up. Make arrangements for the rest you need.

As you retire, commit to meet with God first thing in the morning.

When you awake rested you are apt to find the morning beautiful.

The Day Dawns: Rising with Praise, Petition, and Planning

Arise with thankfulness and praise to God

Try to get outside! Even for a peek! Try to find a place where you can feel the air, listen to birds, even see the sun come up. Thank God for this new day. You are beholding a mini version of Revelation 21:5, “***Behold, I make all things new!***”

-consider finding a private place... Seek seclusion where you could kneel when you pray.

-Try something like this Celtic prayer (included on your sheet):

It’s morning! Let’s say this together:

The Opening Door

Enter, Lord Christ-
 You have given me life;
 and I welcome Your coming.

I turn now to face You,
 I lift up my eyes.

Be blessing my face, Lord;
 be blessing my eyes.

May all my eyes look on
 be blessed and be bright,
 my neighbors, my loved ones
 be blessed in Your sight.

You have given me life
 and I welcome Your coming.

Be with me, Lord,
 I have joy, I have joy.”

(from Northumbria Community Trust Ltd., Celtic Daily Prayer (New York: HarperOne, 2002), p. 238. Wording adapted.

Petition: Casting Your Cares on Him

-After praise and thanksgiving, declare your dependence on God, ask Him to remove all fear and fill you with His agape love (remember the Triangle of Sufficiency).

-Lay out your concerns and submit them to His care. This is NOT the same thing as worrying!

-Confess your utter need for Him to strengthen you to deal with failures you experience day in and day out. Ask for faith, death to self, to be filled with His agape love today. Pray “*Lord, make me an instrument of your peace today...*”

-Be aware of old habits, distractions that draw off your attention= emails, texts, stock market, tyranny of the urgent (but FIRST I MUST empty the dishwasher...)

Plan: When you will have another session with the Lord

-Have it soon, maybe right after breakfast. As you drive somewhere, to work, on errands, going to see a friend.

-Psalm 119:164, “***Seven times a day I praise you...***” This is what praying without ceasing is expressing (I Thess. 5:17).

-Monks make a plan like this: Lauds at 6:00 a.m., Terce at 9:00 a.m., Sext at noon, None at 3:00 p.m., Vespers Evensong at 6:00 p.m., Compline at 9:00 p.m and Vigils during the night.

-My story of spending a few days at a retreat house up in Santa Barbara, asked one of the brothers why the bell rang at 5:00 a.m. and then again at 6:00 a.m. “*Because we are bad monks...*”

The point is this...

Schedule your day

-in keeping with your occupation, your responsibilities. No two schedules are going to be identical. What is important to understand is that you have to plan these times to turn your mind to God.

Colossians 3:2 says, “***Set your mind on things above...***”

Ten minutes every 2-3 hours.

-To praise God, to thank God, share the concerns of your heart and mind.

-Do this alone if at all possible. Take a walk outside.

Honing Holy Habits

-Practice by the clock. Not according to how you feel.

-If you have to deal with an “emergency”, no worries! An emergency is like getting tagged, “You’re it!” This practice will help you discern if you really need to get tagged.

The day unfolds

-Practice the habit of seeing the world through God’s eyes.

The Lord’s prayer invites us to do this.

-Ask Jesus to bless the people you’re with throughout your day.

-Every “interruption” is an opportunity for you and Jesus to bless.

The day concludes with grace-filled reflection

Then, late afternoon, before dinner, take fifteen minutes in quiet and solitude to review and examine your day (maybe figure out a quiet place for this, a kind of “station”)

You and Jesus look back over your day to see what happened, to give thanks for successes, try to understand failures. Ask Him for His help in what went wrong, to better understand it, to do better tomorrow.

Jesus is interested in this project that you are! What God gets out of your life is the person you become...

There is no room for self-righteousness. All of this is grace soaked in God’s acceptance of us.

We pray over what we have done, failed to do. We do not berate ourselves, or fret over failures because Jesus doesn’t.

God has LIFE in mind for you and me.

After sunset, a new day begins, and a new life.

Repeat the above. Make your plan to do it again. And again...

“I assure you that not many days will pass before you begin to understand the sweetness of walking with Jesus in the sufficiency of the Good Shepherd.” (P. 211)

As you and I practice living our days in the sufficiency of the Good Shepherd we will make great progress in experiencing the Psalm 23 kind of life that Jesus came to provide.

[Dallas concludes his guidance on the Psalm 23 Kind of life with a prayer for each of us. I invite you to close your eyes and open your hands to receive this prayer for you from him.

TABLE TALK

1. Snow Man
 -Using your “placemat” and a pencil, close your eyes and in one minute draw a snow man.
 -When done, go around and introduce your snowman to your table. Tell us about your snowman’s day and how they come to look like this. Tell these stories for about ten minutes.
2. The Psalm 23 Kind of Life is fun! How fun? Just think about snow. Snow is for snowmen and... SNOW BALLS!! TIME FOR A SNOWBALL “FIGHT”! On three, grab and throw! Ready? One, two THREE!!
3. Refreshments served. What is some new thinking you are taking away from this series on Living the Psalm 23 Kind of Life?
4. What do you think about Willard’s suggestions for planning to spend the day with Jesus?

WALK THE TALK

- invite Jen Varnell up to introduce deliveries

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.***

See you here January 12!!!

Merry Christmas and Happy new year!