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Living in HisStory: Revealing the True Wonder of Who God is
The Lord is My Shepherd
2 Samuel 5:1-5; Psalm 23; John 10:1-18
January 21, 2018, Jeff Germo

How many of you are going through something in your life right now that is very difficult for you? I know many of you are.

[Live poll]

I want to do a live poll using your smart phones or tablets. It's important that you answer very honestly. It is completely anonymous and you don't get any "Jesus points" for saying that you are not overwhelmed by life.

This is very simple. Open the browser on your smartphone and open up www.menti.com and type in the code 436976 when it asks you for a code. For those who are not here today and are watching this online you can also do this and the results will be updated for us to look at later.

The question is, "**How much are you feeling overwhelmed by life?**" There are five responses for you to choose from: **Not at all; A wee bit; I'm often anxious; I'm always anxious; and I'm desperate.**

We are at different places on the scale from "Not at all" to "I'm desperate" in regards to whether or not we are feeling overwhelmed by life. Most of us will move on this continuum depending on what is happening in our lives. That is very normal and we don't need to feel shame about that. What God wants to do, however, is, through the difficulties we face, train us to trust him in everything, no matter what we are going through, so that we are living in his peace, joy, love and hope on an ongoing basis. That may seem like a pipe dream to some of you, but I really believe it is possible if we purposefully allow Jesus to train us. That is what discipleship with Jesus is all about.

This morning, we are going to continue on with the narrative about David. Last week we took a look at his very complex relationship with King Saul. Today we are going to look a bit at his coronation and the events leading up to and surrounding him becoming king, and his relationship with God while he was going through all that.

To begin with, I want to read a Psalm (42) that is not attributed to him in the introduction of the Psalm, but one that most Bible scholars believe he penned. The introduction to the Psalm reads, "*For the choir director: A psalm of the descendants of Korah.*" Normally, that would mean that the "Sons of Korah" wrote the Psalm. In this case it is likely not so. The nature of the Psalm is very Davidic. It is most probable that David wrote the Psalm and submitted it to the Sons of Korah to put to music to use in worship.

There are two main guesses as to when David wrote this, either when he was hiding from his son, Absalom, who was trying to kill him and take the throne, or when he was hiding in the caves of En Gedi from King Saul who was trying to kill him. In either case, David was feeling very desperate. And in his desperation he called out to God and then penned this amazing Psalm. Try to get into his head as we read this. Think about what he was going through.

[2]

Psalm 42 (NLT)

¹ As the deer longs for streams of water, so I long for you, O God. ² I thirst for God, the living God. When can I go and stand before him? ³ Day and night I have only tears for food, while my enemies continually taunt me, saying, “Where is this God of yours?”

[3]

⁴ My heart is breaking as I remember how it used to be: I walked among the crowds of worshipers, leading a great procession to the house of God, singing for joy and giving thanks amid the sound of a great celebration! ⁵ Why am I discouraged? Why is my heart so sad? I will put my hope in God! I will praise him again— my Savior and ⁶my God!

[4]

Now I am deeply discouraged, but I will remember you— even from distant Mount Hermon, the source of the Jordan, from the land of Mount Mizar. ⁷ I hear the tumult of the raging seas as your waves and surging tides sweep over me. ⁸ But each day the Lord pours his unfailing love upon me, and through each night I sing his songs, praying to God who gives me life. ⁹ “O God my rock,” I cry, “Why have you forgotten me? Why must I wander around in grief, oppressed by my enemies?”

[5]

¹⁰ Their taunts break my bones. They scoff, “Where is this God of yours?” ¹¹ Why am I discouraged? Why is my heart so sad? I will put my hope in God! I will praise him again— my Savior and my God!

Can you feel the tension David is experiencing here? Whatever he was going through, whether he was running for his life from his son, Absalom, or from King Saul, he was living in the tension between his desperate situation, on one hand, and on the other hand, his knowledge that God would once more, as always, prove to be faithful.

¹ Why am I discouraged? Why is my heart so sad? I will put my hope in God! I will praise him again— my Savior and my God!

This is the tension David lived in much of the time, between a very desperate situation, and knowing that God would be his deliverer. I know there are many of you here who are experiencing this reality right now. I have been there myself several times in my life, and in those times I've marinated in this Psalm and allowed the Holy Spirit to minister to me.

Let's do a review of where we have come thus far in our journey through the Biblical narrative.

Remember the three threads that weave their way through history and through our lives:

[6]

- 1. God is up to something.**
- 2. Satan is up to something.**
- 3. We, left to our own devices, without the grace of God and the power of the Holy Spirit, most naturally move away from God.**

[7]

So, God created the heavens and the earth and everything in them, including the first man and woman, Adam and Eve, whom he put in the paradise of the Garden of Eden. He gave them everything they needed for life. There was perfect *shalom*. They never had that sick feeling in the pit of their stomach like something is not quite right, because everything was perfect. They had

perfect peace in their relationship to each other and they had perfect peace in their relationship to God.

God, their Father and creator, told them that they had only one rule and that was they were not to eat from the tree God put in the middle of the garden called the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. He said if they ate of it they would surely die.

Satan came along and twisted God's words and told them they actually wouldn't die, but they would become like gods. They believed his lie and ate of the fruit. Their relationship with God was broken. They began to distrust each other and God, and from then on, life became hard.

God's original goal in creation was that his *shalom* would be evident in all relationships, so he set a plan in motion to restore his peace again to the earth. He called Sarah and Abraham in Genesis 12 to be the start of a nation he could use as conduits to take his blessing of peace to every nation on earth. He promised them, not only that their descendants would be too numerous to count, but that he would give them land in which to settle.

[8]

God always uses broken people to do his work, so it has never been a straight line. We all suffer from the same malady as every human being since the fall of Adam, the proclivity to go our own way instead of God's. That's how the narrative of God's people reads. It is full of ups and downs; times of believing and trusting, and many times of disbelieving and thinking they knew best. God continually wooed them back to him with his love. They had brief periods of contrition, and long eras of disobedience and blatant idolatry. They were no different than we are.

The nation of Israel grew to over two million people while in captivity as slaves in Egypt. They were brutally oppressed by the Egyptians. They cried out to God to deliver them. God raised up Moses who, through a long process and many miracles delivered them from slavery.

They ended up wandering in the wilderness for forty years because of their disobedience. It's easy to see the three threads weaving their way through their wanderings. **1. God was up to something. 2. Satan was up to something. 3. They most naturally wandered away from God.**

After Moses died, Joshua took over the leadership and led them across the Jordan River to settle in the land God had promised them. Once settled, they looked at the nations around them and seeing that they had kings, asked God to give them a king to lead them as well. He warned them that their kings would oppress them. They wanted one anyway, so Saul became their first king. He looked every bit a king. He was tall and handsome. But, he was extremely insecure, and his insecurity and pride led to his downfall.

He became jealous of the young shepherd boy, David, and spent most of his life tormented in his spirit, obsessed with doing whatever he could to destroy David's life. It's impossible to know exactly how long David was on the run from King Saul, but it was likely about ten years or so.

As we said last week, Saul, in a battle with the Philistines, took his own life so he wouldn't be captured and tortured. A witness to Saul's suicide ran to David to give him the news of Saul and Jonathan's deaths. He told David that *he* had killed Saul, thinking that he would get a reward. Instead, David had him killed for killing God's anointed king.

David mourned bitterly and even composed a funeral song in honour of Saul and Jonathan. I want to read it for you so you can see David's heart. Remember, for about ten years, Saul relentlessly hunted David and attempted, many times, to kill him. God had told David at the beginning of that ten year run that he had anointed *him* as the rightful king of Israel, so David had every right to Saul's throne. He chose, however, not to exercise that right, but to let God vindicate him instead. Here is the eulogy David wrote for Saul and Jonathan.

[9]

2 Samuel 1:19–27 (NLT)

¹⁹ Your pride and joy, O Israel, lies dead on the hills! Oh, how the mighty heroes have fallen!

²⁰ Don't announce the news in Gath, don't proclaim it in the streets of Ashkelon, or the daughters of the Philistines will rejoice and the pagans will laugh in triumph.

[10]

²¹ O mountains of Gilboa, let there be no dew or rain upon you, nor fruitful fields producing offerings of grain. For there the shield of the mighty heroes was defiled; the shield of Saul will no longer be anointed with oil. ²² The bow of Jonathan was powerful, and the sword of Saul did its mighty work. They shed the blood of their enemies and pierced the bodies of mighty heroes.

[11]

²³ How beloved and gracious were Saul and Jonathan! They were together in life and in death. They were swifter than eagles, stronger than lions. ²⁴ O women of Israel, weep for Saul, for he dressed you in luxurious scarlet clothing, in garments decorated with gold. ²⁵ Oh, how the mighty heroes have fallen in battle! Jonathan lies dead on the hills.

[12]

²⁶ How I weep for you, my brother Jonathan! Oh, how much I loved you! And your love for me was deep, deeper than the love of women! ²⁷ Oh, how the mighty heroes have fallen! Stripped of their weapons, they lie dead.

I'm not sure how you felt when we read that but I was moved by the integrity of David's heart. Think about it. David called Saul gracious and a mighty hero. He either had a very short selective memory, or he was making a conscious choice to see the good in Saul, in spite of how much Saul had hurt him.

[13]

Remember, Saul started to seethe with jealousy after the ladies of the town sang their song comparing David to Saul. "***Saul has kill his thousands, and David his tens of thousands.***" When David was playing his harp for Saul, Saul hurled a spear at him, intending to pin him to the wall. From that point on, David had to run from Saul.

While David was on the run, Saul gave David's wife, Michal to another man, just to spite David. David remained faithful to Saul. He would not speak a bad word about him. David had at least two chances to kill Saul and both times he used those opportunities, against the advice of his men, to try instead to make peace with Saul. And both times, it looked as if Saul was repentant, but he continued his relentless pursuit of David. And David, for his part, refused to speak negatively against Saul. That is integrity. He kept his heart pure and refused to think or speak evil against Saul.

While I was preparing my sermon last week about the jealousy of Saul and this week's sermon I was convicted by the Holy Spirit that there was someone from my past that I really hadn't forgiven. I thought I had. I had said the words, but the Lord showed me that, in my heart of hearts, I still had ill feelings towards this person. I had to make a conscious decision to pray for blessing on him and want his best. It was tough for me to do, but I realized that as long as I was harbouring those ill feelings I was binding myself up. I hadn't actually forgiven.

Forgiving doesn't mean blindly pretending that there was no harm done to me. There was. It simply means that I am releasing the emotional harm done to me and its power over me, by choosing to bless them. That is liberating me to live in God's love.

There might be someone from your past you need to forgive. And maybe you feel like you already said the words, but they ring hollow because you still harbour some very negative feelings towards them. If that's true, you need to gain freedom by choosing to ask for God's blessing on them. Pray that the love of God would so overtake them that their heart would powerfully experience the love of Jesus.

Back to David. After Saul died there were some power struggles for the throne. Abner, the commander of Saul's army, crowned Saul's son, Ishbosheth, king of Israel. The tribe of Judah, however, was loyal to David. There was a whole bunch of drama until David was eventually crowned king of all Israel in 2 Samuel 5.

[14]

2 Samuel 5:1–5 (NLT)

¹ Then all the tribes of Israel went to David at Hebron and told him, “We are your own flesh and blood. ² In the past, when Saul was our king, you were the one who really led the forces of Israel. And the Lord told you, ‘You will be the shepherd of my people Israel. You will be Israel’s leader.’ ”

[15]

³ So there at Hebron, King David made a covenant before the Lord with all the elders of Israel. And they anointed him king of Israel. ⁴ David was thirty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned forty years in all. ⁵ He had reigned over Judah from Hebron for seven years and six months, and from Jerusalem he reigned over all Israel and Judah for thirty-three years.

David had a long, successful career as king of Israel from the age of thirty until he was seventy. At his coronation it was remembered that God had told him,

[16]

‘You will be the shepherd of my people Israel. You will be Israel’s leader.’ ”

As a young boy he worked as a shepherd for his father. David knew how to shepherd sheep. He had cared for them since he was a young boy. He had to fight off lions and bears to keep the sheep safe. He knew well how to shepherd sheep. Now God was asking him to shepherd his people. And people are much more complicated than sheep. Sheep are much more loyal than people. They are easy to care for. You just need to feed them and bring them to some water and keep them safe. They are docile. They don't vie for power. They know their place. They are sheep.

The one thing sheep have in common with people, however, is their tendency to wander away. They keep their head down and eat and they can wander off away from the shepherd and into disastrous situations.

[17]

USA Today carried this story in 2005 from Istanbul, Turkey:

“First one sheep jumped to its death. Then stunned Turkish shepherds, who had left the herd to graze while they had breakfast, watched as nearly 1,500 others followed, each leaping off the same cliff, Turkish media reported. In the end, 450 dead animals lay on top of one another in a billowy white pile, the Aksam newspaper said. Those who jumped later were saved as the pile got higher and the fall more cushioned. After one of the sheep tried to jump a ravine, the rest of the flock followed.”¹

That’s pretty bizarre. Sheep are not the brightest animals in the animal kingdom. There is a reason God likens us to sheep.

[18]

We are prone to wander and we need a shepherd.

People are much more complex than sheep, however. We struggle with insecurities. We vie for power. We compete with each other. We don’t naturally work well together. We don’t easily trust the leaders God gives us. David knew that. He had had to contend with many different kinds of people over the years. He knew it was not going to be easy. But, he also knew that God had called him to be the shepherd of Israel.

David reigned for forty years. He had much success in those years, but he also had a couple blips along the way where he chose to follow his passions instead of God’s. The big one, of course, was his adultery with Bathsheba and the murder of her husband. For the most part, though, David was, as God described him, a man after God’s own heart.

Most mornings I read a Psalm as part of my daily reading plan. The Psalms let us peer into David’s heart. He had a longing for God. When he was up and when he was down he thirsted after God. He knew he was desperately dependant on God to shepherd him as he shepherded God’s people.

The most well known Psalm is probably Psalm 23. In it David describes God as his shepherd who nurtures and protects him and pursues him with his love.

[19]

I think **the secret to David’s success as king was his deep seated knowledge that the Lord was his shepherd who loved him completely and unconditionally.** Let’s peek into David’s heart because this is how he was able withstand the many difficulties he had. When he was feeling overwhelmed with life he remembered who God is and who he was to God.

[20]

Psalm 23 (NLT)

¹ https://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/offbeat/2005-07-08-sheep-suicide_x.htm

¹ The Lord is my shepherd; I have all that I need. ² He lets me rest in green meadows; he leads me beside peaceful streams. ³ He renews my strength. He guides me along right paths, bringing honor to his name.

[21]

⁴ Even when I walk through the darkest valley, I will not be afraid, for you are close beside me. Your rod and your staff protect and comfort me. ⁵ You prepare a feast for me in the presence of my enemies. You honor me by anointing my head with oil. My cup overflows with blessings.

[22]

⁶ Surely your goodness and unfailing love will pursue me all the days of my life, and I will live in the house of the Lord forever.

You can tell from reading this Psalm that David knew God intimately. He had walked with him in the deep valleys of his life and had gotten to know from his heart that even when he overwhelmed with life, God, as his shepherd would lead him through. ⁶ ***“Surely your goodness and unfailing love will pursue me all the days of my life...”***

Like David, we need to know, from our hearts, that the Lord is our shepherd. We need to know that he will meet all our needs. We need to know, when we are in the middle of a deep dark valley that he will be close beside us. Above all, we need to know that he pursues us with his unfailing love. And we need to spend time with Jesus so we get to know his voice.

I want to close this morning by reading from John 10 in which Jesus describes himself as our good shepherd.

[23]

John 10:1–18 (NLT)

¹ “I tell you the truth, anyone who sneaks over the wall of a sheepfold, rather than going through the gate, must surely be a thief and a robber! ² But the one who enters through the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. ³ The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep recognize his voice and come to him. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.

[24]

⁴ After he has gathered his own flock, he walks ahead of them, and they follow him because they know his voice. ⁵ They won’t follow a stranger; they will run from him because they don’t know his voice.” ⁶ Those who heard Jesus use this illustration didn’t understand what he meant, ⁷ so he explained it to them: “I tell you the truth, I am the gate for the sheep.

[25]

⁸ All who came before me were thieves and robbers. But the true sheep did not listen to them. ⁹ Yes, I am the gate. Those who come in through me will be saved. They will come and go freely and will find good pastures. ¹⁰ The thief’s purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life.

[26]

¹¹ “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd sacrifices his life for the sheep. ¹² A hired hand will run when he sees a wolf coming. He will abandon the sheep because they don’t belong to him and he isn’t their shepherd. And so the wolf attacks them and scatters the flock. ¹³ The hired hand runs away because he’s working only for the money and doesn’t really care about the sheep.

[27]

¹⁴ “I am the good shepherd; I know my own sheep, and they know me, ¹⁵ just as my Father knows me and I know the Father. So I sacrifice my life for the sheep. ¹⁶ I have other sheep, too, that are not in this sheepfold. I must bring them also. They will listen to my voice, and there will be one flock with one shepherd.

[28]

¹⁷ “The Father loves me because I sacrifice my life so I may take it back again. ¹⁸ No one can take my life from me. I sacrifice it voluntarily. For I have the authority to lay it down when I want to and also to take it up again. For this is what my Father has commanded.”

Jesus is our Good Shepherd. He is the one who will lead us through the valleys of our lives and to quiet waters when we need his peace. In Matthew 11 Jesus said:

[29]

Matthew 11:28–30 (NLT)

²⁸ “Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light.”

Like David, in the Psalms he wrote, we do not have to pretend everything is okay. We don't have to put on a happy face and wear a plastic smile and pretend we aren't bothered by the hard things we are going through. That kind of duplicity does not produce growth. Growth happens when we are honest about where we are at and then allow Jesus to teach us how to trust him in everything.

No matter what you are going through right now, Jesus wants to teach you to walk with him through it so you can have his peace, joy, hope and love. Even though you walk through the valley of the shadow of death, you won't fear, because he will never, ever let you go.



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Week of January 21, 2018

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Objective of this study: To understand how to allow Jesus to shepherd us through difficult times.

[Remember, the main goal of each Growth Group is to allow God's Word to change your heart so that others would see Jesus in you and be likewise changed to be like him. He wants to change the world through us]

Worship (5 – 10 minutes)

1. Sing a song or two of praise and thanksgiving to God.
2. Spend five minutes in silence asking God to prepare your heart for how he wants to speak to you.
3. After the five minutes have someone interrupt the silence and read **Psalm 23** meditatively to the group. Pause after each phrase letting God speak to you. **Did anything “jump out at you”?**

Welcome (5 minutes)

Stormy weather: Love, hate, somewhere in between?

[It's really important when doing this study that we each think about ourselves specifically and ways we need to grow, not how Christians in general need to grow. Do the hard work of letting the Holy Spirit speak to *your* heart.]

Word/Work (60-90 minutes)

1. Where are you on the overwhelmed continuum?
 “Not at all < A wee bit < Usually anxious < Always Anxious < Desperate”
2. Read Psalm 42 - David wrote this while he was ‘in the thick of it’.
 1. What might his situation have been?
 2. Where was David on the overwhelmed continuum?
 3. What did David do with his stress?
 4. Look closely at how he spoke to God. How did he express himself and what choices did he make?
 5. When have you been the most honest with God?
3. Read Psalm 23 - David wrote this after having walked with God for many years.
 1. Looking at this Psalm, what can you see he had learned about God?
 2. Looking back on your life where can you see God pursuing you with his love?
4. What is your natural response to crisis?
5. What can you learn from these Psalms about how you can relate to God while you are ‘in the thick of it’?

“We are prone to wander and we need a shepherd.”

Prayer

1. Spend some time in prayer. Start by worshipping God for who he is and what he has done. Focus on being grateful. Pray about the things you discussed in the study.
2. Here are some things you can pray about for the church:
 - A. Praise God that he met all our needs financially last year.
 - B. That, as a church, we would actively and purposefully engage in the mission of Jesus in Campbell River.
 - C. Our church board and staff as they lead us to live out the mission of Jesus
 - D. River Kids ministry as they reach out to kids in our community.
 - E. **Our missionary of the month:** Aaron and Julie Gole at Camp Homewood
 - F. **Our missionary of the week:** Rod and Donna Black
 - G. **Local CR church:** Vineyard Church - Pastors Barry and Nancy Kardaal.