

INI Hymns:
3rd Sunday after Easter

Sermon 24-18
4/21/24

Psalm 34:8

*“Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good;
Blessed is the man who trusts in Him!”*

Dear Fellow Redeemed,

An elderly woman was selling artificial fruit in a craft fair. One day a customer complained the fruit she sold was not very realistic. It was too perfect. Like this apple, she said, it’s too red, too round and too big to be a real apple. At that point the seller picked up the apple and took a bite. Sometimes what seems too good to be true really is true.

The resurrection of Jesus is a good example. It has been critically examined and judged by many throughout the years, and the conclusion of most is that it cannot be proven and is probably too good to be true. But if you will pick it up and take a bite you will see that Christ is real! He is alive! That is what King David urges us to do, “Taste and see that the Lord is Good.”

In a similar way we all love the image of Jesus as the Good Shepherd. That is a very tender, loving picture that is very dear to us. Many of us have actual pictures of Jesus as the Good Shepherd on our walls in our homes. But is that all it is to you, just a nice picture that makes you feel good when you look at it? Is it like an artificial piece of fruit that is only for looking at? We don’t really know how GOOD our Shepherd is until we taste it, experience it ourselves in our daily lives. So on this Good Shepherd Sunday we want to

Taste and See that the LORD is Our Good Shepherd.

King David truly tasted the Lord’s goodness and he tells us about how amazing our Good Shepherd really is in many of his Psalms. Today we are going to focus on Psalm 34.

Verses 4-6 “I sought the Lord, and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears. They looked to Him and were radiant, and their faces were not ashamed. This poor man cried out, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles.” First of all David wants us to know **God hears our prayers and delivers us.**

There is an interesting story behind this Psalm. The heading for this Psalm indicates that David wrote it “when he pretended madness before Abimelech, who drove him away, and he departed.” This was during the time of David’s life when he was running from King Saul. He hid in many places throughout the land of Israel. Saul always found out where he was and came after him with his army. God always protected David but he was running out of places to hide. So David decided to go live in the land of the Philistines, Israel’s enemies. Saul couldn’t pursue him there. But then some of the Philistines recognized David and took him to king Abimelech who is also called Achish in 1 Samuel. We read that David “was much afraid of Achish the king of Gath.” That is when David pretended to be insane and Abimelech said, “Look, you see the man is insane. Why have you brought him to me? Have I need of madmen, that you have brought this fellow to play the madman in my presence? Shall this fellow come into my house?” 1 Samuel 21:14-15. So he sent David away. David praises God for delivering him again.

Then in verse 7 David assures us that everyone who fears God can count on God to deliver them. He says, “The Angel of the Lord encamps all around those who fear Him, and delivers them.” Isn’t that a wonderful promise? Remember the Angel of the Lord is the Son of God, the pre-incarnate Jesus. This is our Good Shepherd. He encamps all around those who fear Him to deliver them. He protects and delivers us from every trouble.

David also describes how our Good Shepherd **Provides All Our Needs**. Vs. 9-10 “There is no want to those who fear Him. The young lions lack and suffer hunger; but those who seek the Lord shall not lack any good thing.” During that whole time that David was fleeing from Saul, the Lord provided for all his needs. And it wasn’t just David alone. When Saul wanted to kill David, his family was also in danger. All of David’s brothers and their families came out and lived with David in the wilderness along with many other outcasts. There were about 400 men that joined him plus their families. That was a lot of people to provide for in the wilderness, but God made sure they always had enough. The Good Shepherd always provided for him. That is why David wrote in Psalm 23, “The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want.” I shall not lack any good thing.

David knew first hand how GOOD his Shepherd is, but He doesn’t want us to simply take his word for it. That’s why He says in our text, verse 8, *“Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good; Blessed is the man who trusts in Him!”* Experience your Shepherds goodness for yourself. How do we do that? King David points to four things that will enable us to truly Taste the Goodness of our Shepherd Lord.

First and foremost He says to **Fear the Lord**. “Oh, fear the Lord, you His saints!” Vs. 9 Tasting the goodness of the Lord begins with the fear of the Lord. Then David offers, “Come, you children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord.” Vs. 11 That sounds contradictory. How can you see the goodness of something you fear? But with the Lord that is absolutely true. Before you can see how good the Lord is you need to know the holiness and justice of God. This is the God who destroyed the whole world in a flood because of the sinfulness and corruption of the people. The same God who sent fire and brimstone down from heaven to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah and three other cities because of their wickedness. We need to know that “it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.” Heb. 10:31 This is the God who gave the death penalty for eating a single piece of forbidden fruit.

It’s rather ironic, many people today don’t believe in hell. They say a loving God would never do that. But the truth is, you will never know how loving God is until you know that Hell is real. God’s love is seen in how He saved us from hell. King David says in verse 18 “The Lord is near to those who have a broken heart, and saves such as have a contrite spirit.” God, who hates sin and must punish sin, loved this sinful, corrupt world so much that He gave His one and only, perfectly holy Son to die in our place? That gives us the confidence to turn to God in repentance rather than futilely trying to hide from God. King David tasted this goodness of the Lord. He wrote in Psalm 32:5 “I acknowledged my sin to You, and my iniquity I have not hidden. I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,” and You forgave the iniquity of my sin.”

That’s when we begin to really taste that the Lord is Good! When we know His wrath against our sins and then receive His love and forgiveness instead of the just punishment. Oh, our Shepherd is truly Good that He “laid down His life for the Sheep.” John 10:15 Then the fearful dread of God is turned into the highest reverence and honour of our Holy, Almighty God. We look up to Him in respect, and love Him dearly because He first loved us. Come to your Shepherd with a broken heart and a contrite spirit; Come with a genuine sorrow in your heart over your sins and you will taste for yourself how GOOD He is.

There is so much more to taste of His Goodness. It’s not like tasting a single apple. Our Good Shepherd is a smorgasbord of deliciousness for us to taste. Listen to what David says in verses 12-14, “Who is the man who desires life, and loves many days, that he may see good?” Do you want to enjoy more of your Shepherd’s blessings? Then David says, “Keep your tongue from evil,

and your lips from speaking deceit. Depart from evil and do good; Seek peace and pursue it.” We can taste more of His goodness when we **Live in Righteousness.**

God has forgiven all our sins and declared us righteous, so now live in that righteousness. How you live your life makes a difference. Our Shepherd blesses those who live with Him even more abundantly. Turn away from evil and do good, do your Saviour’s will. Imitate Christ with your life. “Seek peace and pursue it.” We have peace with God through Jesus our Good Shepherd who gave His life for us. Now we should also pursue peace, do everything you can to have peace with other people. Don’t just give up and say, “Oh well.” Pursue peace with them.

David sums it up in verses 15-17, “The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and His ears are open to their cry. The face of the Lord is against those who do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth. The righteous cry out, and the Lord hears, and delivers them out of all their troubles.” Some seem to think that, as God’s children, we shouldn’t ever have any troubles. David says in verse 19, “Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all.” We actually taste the goodness of the Lord more when we face troubles and heart aches and the Lord delivers us, than if everything was always going smoothly. That’s because if we never have any troubles we quickly forget that it is God who is blessing us. We take it for granted that our life is good and even take credit for it ourselves.

That brings us to the third key to be able to Taste the Goodness of our Shepherd. That is simply to **Take Note of our Shepherd’s blessings.**

Remember when David pretended to be mad and escaped the hands of Abimelech who could have killed him? He didn’t think, “Wow, that was pretty smart of me to get out of that one!” No, he recognized that God was the one who spared him. God made his trick work to fool Abimelech. So he praised and glorified God. To really taste and see how Good your Shepherd is, we need to recognize that every good thing comes from Him. Think about it in your daily life. Every day is filled with His Goodness. We just need to stop and take notice of it.

Then, when we do Taste and See that the LORD is Our Good Shepherd, we will do as David did in the opening verses of this Psalm, **Give all praise and glory to our Saviour God.** “I will bless the Lord at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul shall make its boast in the Lord; The humble shall hear of it and be glad.” Verses 1-2 The more we praise and bless God for His goodness, the more our hearts rejoice. We start seeing and tasting God’s goodness more and more. Then we learn to trust in Him more fully and we are even further blessed. For “Blessed is the man who trusts in Him!” We can help each other. David calls on us to join Him in giving praise to God. “Oh, magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His name together.” Verse 3.

This is important! We are not just to praise God in our own mind and heart and in our prayers. That of course should be first. But we are also to magnify the Lord together with our fellow believers. Share with one another the ways that God has blessed you, just as David does in so many of His Psalms. Join in praising God together. Then, as David says, “The humble shall hear of it and be glad.” It is a tremendous source of encouragement to lift each other up, when we share our joy in God’s blessings with each other. Tell each other how our Good Shepherd has blessed you, and we will all rejoice together and learn to Taste and See that the Lord is our Good Shepherd.

Amen.