

Series: The Benefits of Intergenerational Spiritual Formation

Sermon Text: Psalm 23

Title: Intergenerational Community Sermon 3 of 4

BIG IDEA: Our lives are a shared journey following Christ from infancy through death.

(App to get lesson/slides, ask questions. Color Pg)

Good morning my friends and family, it does my heart good to see your faces and hear your voices, because by them, I know that I am enjoyed. We are three weeks into our intergenerational community mini series focussed on appreciating our community's different ages and stages of life as we name some of the benefits that they, that we bring. Our scriptural anchor point for the month is Psalm 23 if you want to turn there in your bibles or navigate your bible app on your phone...

We've been walking through Psalm 23, and noticing that it speaks to every season of life, every age and stage we could possibly go through.

Up on the screen is how I've divided David's Psalm into different ages/stages:

| | | | |
|--------------|----------|------------|-------------|
| Psalm 23:1-3 | Children | Psalm 23:4 | Adults |
| Psalm 23:5 | Old Age | Psalm 23:6 | End of Life |

Week 1 verses 1-3 reminded us that children benefit our intergenerational community by keeping us humble and in a receptive posture to God.

Week 2, last week, we grappled with verse 4 showing that adults benefit all of us by actively partnering with God to bring more of heaven, both externally—out in our world, and internally—within ourselves.

This week, we will embrace the stage of life that I call old age, as we sit with verse 5.

Like the past two weeks, we are anchored in Psalm 23. If you are planning to memorize this psalm with me, I invite you to say it with me. It's up on the screen.

- 1 The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.
- 2 He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters.
- 3 He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness
for his name's sake.
- 4 Even 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.
- 5 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.
- 6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall
dwell in the house of the Lord Forever.

Three weeks in, and we're already at old age. Boy, doesn't time fly by? Well, as we talk about the benefits of old age and verse 5, I want to confess that this is the first week where I am out of my element... I haven't hit this stage of life yet. BUT, several wonderful folks who ARE in this stage of life have read over the message

and gave me the thumbs up to its accuracy, so rest assured, this message has been approved.

With verse 5 before us, let's begin walking through it.

You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.

What I have been noticing in this mini series is that each week builds upon the previous... and I really want to make a point about it here that... We cannot get to old age without first going through childhood and adulthood ourselves. This means that verses 1 and 2 and 3 and 4 all lay the groundwork or in our case, set the table for verse 5.

You prepare a table before me...

If it's true that God has always been with you, like verse 4 declared, and like verses 1-3 demonstrated, then by the time you get to old age, God, it seems, is ready to sit with you, whether you want to interact with him or not. And the two of you are not alone! God invites others to gather around you two, even your enemies. Isn't "enemy" a strong word? Who really has people they would call enemies anymore?

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

King David, the writer of this Psalm, way back in Israel's history, he had enemies that wanted him dead, big time... he was a king after all. Given the opportunity, his

enemies would have killed David without hesitation. But in today's world, it's pretty easy to stay away from people who bother you, and so many laws and guidelines that stop the escalation of people really becoming enemies and with so much to do, who has time for enemies? There might be a person or two who hates your guts, or has wished you dead at some point. More than likely, there's someone in your life that you'd be quite happy to never see again, or that they would be happy to never see you again. But if you've ever read Jesus' sermon on the mount, you will remember Jesus brings our external actions and our internal motivations into the same discussion just like last week, where we talked about adults partnering with God to bring more of heaven both externally to the world and internally into ourselves. And it seems to me that this is exactly the kind of table talk God has in store in verse 5. In old age, God checks in with you, kind of like a review of your life...

How has your life gone? How have your actions played out with your family, your community, the world? Who have you hurt, damaged? Any enemies?

How have you been tending your inner life, your hopes and dreams, your motivations and struggles? How have you partnered with me, God asks, regarding your anxieties and fears, your anger, your judgmental prideful side? How has it played out with showing love and grace and mercy to others and to yourself? How has asking for and offering forgiveness been going?

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

It seems like God is inviting you, in your old age, to take stock of your life, to take an inventory of your outer and inner world with him, and, hypothetically, with

those who have critiques against you. What stories of you would they tell? What would the very people you don't want to speak about you have to say about you? Who do you wish you could forget about? Who comes to mind and heart for you right now? Oof. I thought adulthood was difficult. I'll pass on this whole, "God preparing a table before me in the presence of my enemies," thing. No thank you.

But the reality is that life catches up with us in old age; the good, the bad, the ugly, the beautiful... God seems to bring ALL of your life thus far into consideration and conversation. What an exposing time, right? I mean, in old age, if you had kids, you can really see the mark you left on them, for better or for worse. In old age, your reputation and character can no longer be hidden, you've lived too much life to be able to hide who you really are. Too much time has passed. In old age, your body is no longer able to hide the true nature of your character and your soul, it doesn't have the strength... If you didn't tame your anger/bitterness throughout your adulthood, guess what, anger and bitterness are what's coming out of you whether you like it or not. But the other side is true also, Thank the Lord! If you've spent your years actively being kind to others, being generous with your resources, affectionate with your love... the light that has stored up in your heart will shine all the brighter to others. In reality, we are a combination of both healthy and unhealthy character traits.

[Let's take a breath here real quick... don't get swallowed up in all this confession, for soon assurance will come, hang in there, we are close.]

I guess the Proverbs really are true... God will not be mocked... we cannot escape the sow and reap principle. Generally speaking, as many of our scripture's proverbs reveal, what you sow, you will reap. But all this proves God to be true to his word. Your life, regardless of how you conducted yourself, God's honor

remains intact, the truth of your life is revealed; the fruit of your choices and actions will ripen.

The question is, what kind of fruit has your life produced?

Who is feeling real good about themselves right about now? Anyone?

Alright, we've had our veggies, who's ready for dessert? Me too!

God, while it's true, that...

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

In the same sentence, without a period at the end of that sobering statement...

You anoint my head with oil;

With my entire life laid bare, all vulnerable and transparent, with so many of the consequences of my life before and around me, with everyone able to see what the product of my life's choices and actions have come to be...

Yet, You anoint my head with oil;

You lift your countenance to me, your face shining, your voice encouraging

But God, I'm not a little child anymore, not knowing right from wrong...

Lord, I know what's right, it's painfully obvious to me now, and I know so much of the wrong I've done too. Oh God, how did I ever get here?

Even so, you anoint my head with oil;

You continue to bless me, calling me by name, equipping me for service...

I'm not in the prime of my life any longer? What can I do these days to undo the damage that I've caused? For so much of it, I can't go back, I can't undo what I've done. I don't think I have the strength, even if I could.

With unwavering delight, you anoint my head with oil;
You grant me your strength, your power, to not give up or despair!

I'm laid bare before you! I'm completely at your mercy! Oh God, have mercy on me, be gentle, be kind.

With gentle hands, you anoint my head with oil;
You set me apart, you commission me to continue in the good works you made me for!

[And] my cup overflows. How could it not?

In the inevitable table that God invites you to sit at, honestly appraising your life and all therein, maybe at night, lying in bed staring into the endless dark, unable to fall asleep, God is with you; his rod and staff, his continued, shepherd-like protection and guidance, they comfort you. There is no escape from the way God set up the rules of the universe, from this sow and reap principle, but there is a way through it... Like the Israelites at the shore of the Red Sea, with the accumulation of their past lives, in the form of chariots and horses and whips, barreling towards them, unable to escape, God makes a way, this time by filling your cup to overflow. As a child, you couldn't help but to be vulnerable, to be transparent. You just were. Now in old age, with the accumulation of all that you have learned, all your hard earned wisdom and cautionary tales and victories and scars you bear, you are invited to be vulnerable and transparent again! This takes an enormous amount of bravery and courage...

What is the benefit of having our old age folks with us in community?

Two main benefits from what I can tell... one honors God directly, the second honors everyone else... and both have the opportunity to honor you.

First, In old age, you honor God directly.

You've lived a lot of life and God is still with you! Not for a moment has he left you. In your life, in YOUR life, God proves his Exodus 34 character, that he is...

“The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation.”

In view of every single moment of every single day of your life, God has been the ultimate faithful witness, in deep and profound ways, AND continually remains faithful to you, his child, just like he said he would. Praise be to our Lord.

And you are blessed all the more, for he sees you with perfect clarity, he knows you through and through, he has experienced you, and he joyfully loves you beyond comprehension. What an honor, a blessing, what a benefit to behold.

Second, in old age, you honor everyone else. But this one is a sliding scale...

To the degree that you open up your life for the consideration of others, is the degree that you will bless them. The life you lived has become, in its own way, a proverb, a story, a tale of what happens. The victories and successes you have, us younger generations need to see, we need to learn from your successes. Show them off for our benefit. But, we also need you to show us your failures, your mess ups, too. Isn't failure the best teacher sometimes? Us younger generations need to learn

from your cautionary tales. You know where some of life's landmines and pitfalls are. Please guide us through the valleys of the shadow of death. Help us navigate the uncertainties and complexities of life! You have so much to share, and you've got perspective on all of this to boot! To the degree that you, in old age, make your life available to us, your juniors, is the degree that you bless us, you partner with God for our benefit... but to the degree that you share your life with us, you will also receive our blessings to you as well! In offering your life's story with the rest of us, you can be for us fountains of wisdom and experience to then be honored and venerated and valued and seen as the treasure that you truly are by the rest of us! This is by God's design! He pours the blessings of a life lived into your cup such that it overflows, thereby blessing those younger than you!

In this way, in vulnerability and transparency, you offer yourselves as a living sacrifice to God, partnering with him to bring more of heaven to our community, you model for the rest of us what a life held by God looks like. And in such an intergenerational community, practicing humility and generosity, and receiving grace and value and veneration, the old hounds of loneliness, regret, and shame of past mistakes and sins that have been tracking you down, they lose their scent.

For now you are enveloped in a community that needs and values you, ALL OF YOU! And in this dynamic, you may find that you can still heal and be restored.

In God's community, you may find the energy to reconcile some of those old wounds and relationships you thought impossible to mend. You may even find yourself beginning to dream again of what might be possible. And for us as your community to witness that, to watch your story continue to unfold... what a glorious and beautiful benefit that would be for us all.

Would you pray with me.

And remember, wherever you are on your journey of trusting Christ, you need not work through anything alone. Reach out and let us help!

Sunday to Monday Connection:

- **Question:** Who has God placed around your table right now, and how might your honesty and humility bless them this week?
- **Next Step:** As we reflect on Tim's message, we see how God meets us in the season of old age with both truth and grace. Old age is a time when life can no longer be hidden. The fruit of our choices—good and bad—becomes visible. We reap what we sow, yet we are never saved or sustained by our record, but by God's faithfulness. The Shepherd who walked with us through green pastures and dark valleys does not abandon us at the end of the road. He pours grace so generously that our cup overflows. For our church, this means our older members are not on the sidelines. Their lives reflect victories and failures while confirming God's mercy and grace. When they share their stories, they honor God and bless the church family. And when we listen with honor, it becomes a place where grace and restoration can be seen and heard.
- **Note:** If you are not a Christ follower and would like to investigate further what all this might mean for you, please come talk with any of our leaders, or the person who brought you.

Takeaways to discuss with your people (in addition to the underlined questions above!):

- How does Psalm 23:5 challenge the idea that it's "too late" for God to work in a person's life?
- What might younger believers gain by listening to the full stories, successes and failures, of older saints?
- What would it look like for our church this week to value honesty over image, and grace over judgment?

Quotes related to this passage:

Considerations for discussion leaders:

1. Keep circling back to the big idea and main points of the passage to stay on track.
2. Keep the group small for deeper sharing. Single underlined sentences are for discussion, while key points are double underlined.
3. Keep the discussion around 30 mins. Once you hit the “sweet spot”, spend your time there.
4. Keep these simple questions in your back pocket: What is God teaching you? What are you going to do about it? How will it help you love & serve others?

Other Articles/Songs/Videos: Please ask us for help obtaining other resources.

Bibliography (Note: Our use of these materials does not imply full agreement with them)

- The Holy Bible: English Standard Version (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016)