

Psalm 23

Lesson 10

You Anoint My Head with Oil

Leader Guide

A Bible Study to Accompany
“A Shepherd Looks At Psalm 23”
by Phillip Keller

Leader Guide Bible Studies

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Lesson 10, Psalm 23, A Psalm of David “You Anoint My Head with Oil...”

Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come. *2 Corinthians 1:21-22*

Prayers

Luther’s Morning Prayer

Thank you, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have kept me this night from all harm and danger; and I pray that You would keep me this day also from sin and every evil, that all my doings and life may please You. For into Your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen.

Read Psalm 23

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.

Introduction

In David’s time, anointing with olive oil was an act of consecration for God’s purposes. The Bible records the anointing of several kings and priests, but evidently, not all were anointed. Jacob anointed a rock with oil, where he envisioned the stairway to heaven at the location to become the Temple Mount. God instructed Moses to mix oil, myrrh, and cinnamon-like spices to anoint Aaron and his sons as priests, the Tabernacle, and all the objects in the Tabernacle used for worship. That mixture of aromatic oil was never to be used again. Daniel referred to the Messiah as the “Anointed One.”

Surprisingly, God's prophets were instructed to anoint several of Israel's enemies. Elisha anointed Hazael, the King of Aram, because he would be an instrument of wrath against Israel for its idolatry. Elisha also anointed Jehu, King of Israel, because he was an instrument of wrath against the house of Ahab and Jezebel, who murdered the LORD's prophets in Judah.

In this lesson, we will study Chapter 10 in "A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23" and discuss God's purposes for anointing you through the Holy Spirit.

Discussion

1. In chapter 10, Pastor Keller tells how flies torment sheep during the summer. Ewes stop nursing, and the ewes and the lambs stop growing gainfully. Sheep race around the pasture until they drop from exhaustion, or they rush into the brush, wounding themselves or even killing themselves while trying to escape the torment of flies. At the first sign of the flies, a good shepherd treats the heads of the sheep with an ointment made of linseed oil, sulfur, and tar. After repeated applications, the sheep soon resume grazing and rest. Not many of us would equate a sheep dip with our anointing by the Holy Spirit at baptism— but Pastor Keller did! Considering that God chose you to be his and anointed you as his priesthood, what do you see your consecrated purpose to be?

2. Jesus told Nicodemus that no one can enter the Kingdom of God without being born again by water and the Spirit (John 3:5). What is the symbolism of going down into the baptismal waters and rising again from the water? See Romans 6:4-5.

^{Ro 6:4} We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. ^{Ro 6:5} If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection.

3. Martin Luther encouraged his parish to remember their baptismal anointing by God's Spirit daily. How do we remember our baptism in practical ways?

4. The Holy Spirit's work comforts us, guides us from sin, keeps us in Christ, equips us for good works, and transforms our thinking. Read the following verses that assure of the Holy Spirit's transformation in our lives and discuss how the Spirit works in our lives.

Ro 12:2 Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is —his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Ro 8:6 The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; ⁷ the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so.

Ro 8:8 Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God.

Ro 8:9 You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.

^{1Co 2:16} But we have the mind of Christ.

- a. How have you seen the Holy Spirit shape your thinking and personality with his gifts of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, and faithfulness (Galatians 5:22)?
 - b. How does the Holy Spirit shape your thinking and personality in ever-increasing measure? Consider your daily and weekly schedule and discuss how you make time for the renewal of the Spirit.
5. The Holy Spirit is called the breath of God (Job 27:3) and living water (John 4:10). What do breath and water have in common? What does this tell you about the importance of the Holy Spirit in your life?
6. Scab is a second malady afflicting the flock in the summer. Scab is a skin disease caused by microscopic parasites and spreads from one sheep to another as they rub heads to bond in their social order. Pastor Keller saw a similarity between the spread of scab and destructive ideas, materialistic values, and an outlook of hatred, prejudice, and cynicism. What are major influences in the world that can contaminate our thoughts and outlook with hatred, prejudice, and cynicism rather than qualities of found in Philippians 4:8?

Phil 4:8 Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.

7. Axel grease. Fall is the mating season for the rams and ewes. Rams will battle to the death for possession of the ewes. A wise shepherd plans for the rut and puts axel grease on the ram's horns so they cannot injure each other. Quarrels, jealousy, and rivalry will develop in any group or organization. How can you be a person of peace when you witness quarreling between people you know?
8. Paul writes that we all receive different gifts to build up the church body and to minister to our neighbors. Although we do not share the same gifts (Paul lists **leadership, discernment, wisdom, knowledge, prophesying (application of spiritual truth), faith, teaching, encouragement, service, charity, generosity, mercy**, and others), we are united in our purpose. What gifts do you have? How do you use them to build up others?

^{1Jn 2:20} But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and all of you know the truth.

^{1Pe 2:4} As you come to him, the living Stone —rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him— ^{1Pe 2:5} you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering **spiritual sacrifices** acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

^{Ro 12:6} We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is **prophesying [applying scriptural truth to situations]**, let him use it in proportion to his **faith**. ⁷ If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him **teach**; ⁸ if it is encouraging, let him **encourage**; if it is contributing to the **needs of others**, let him give **generously**; if it is leadership, let him **govern** diligently; if it is showing **mercy**, let him do it cheerfully.

9. Pastor Keller tells the story of how Fall weather turns chilly, and winter storms threaten following the months of grazing in the high tableland pastures. Storms in the mountains are unpredictable and can be life-threatening, with hail and freezing sleet, especially for the young lambs who do not have thick wool to protect them against rain and ice. The good shepherd is with the flock and is on the lookout for the young lambs who have laid down and are slowly dying from hypothermia. The shepherd will hold them up and give them a bit of brandy to warm them and carry them to shelter. Just as the good shepherd is with his

flock through the valley, on the mountaintop, and with the flock in the storm, so is Christ with us in our suffering. Christ was a man of suffering and sorrows and knows our suffering. He promises never to leave us. Read the following passages describing God's promises to be with us.

a. God promises us _____.

^{2Th 3:2} And pray that we may be delivered from wicked and evil men, for not everyone has faith. ³ But the Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen and protect you from the evil one.

^{2Ti 4:18} The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom. To him be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

b. Jesus promises us _____.

^{Jn 10:27} My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. ²⁸ I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. ²⁹ My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all;

c. God has promised to _____.

^{Heb 13:5b} God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you."

^{Heb 13:6} So we say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?"

d. God promises that _____.

^{Ro 8:35} Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?

^{Ro 8:38} For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹ neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God¹ that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

10. (Optional as time permits) Read the following passages and summarize your thoughts on God's presence during suffering.

^{Mk 14:35} Going a little farther, he [Jesus] fell to the ground and prayed that if possible the hour might pass from him. ³⁶ "Abba, Father," he said, "everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will."

^{2Co 4:8} We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; ⁹ persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed.

^{2Co 4:16} Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day.

^{2Co 4:17} For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.

^{2Co 4:18} So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

^{Jn 10:29} My Father, who has given them [the disciples] to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand.

11. The Holy Spirit impacts all aspects of our life in Christ. He calls us to faith, equips us with faith and spiritual gifts, and gathers us into Christ's body, the Church. He guides, protects, transforms our minds, convicts us of sin, intercedes on our behalf, prays for us in all things, forgives, and sanctifies us from sin. He is God's spirit, the spirit of Christ, living in us so that we might know God with ever-increasing understanding and maturity.

God gives us spiritual rebirth through his Spirit so that we are reborn as his children and sends us to do his will. Individually, we work to accomplish his great commission one relationship at a time and corporately act to reach the world. We acknowledge and praise Christ, serve and care for others, be faithful with the gifts we receive, be generous and charitable, and build others up in their faith. Which of these actions do you see how you have been equipped to do?

1. Making friends and entering deep relationships
2. Acting as a peacemaker and counselor
3. Support of global missions
4. Praising God with joy
5. Serving and caring for others
6. Generous and charitable
7. Teaching and leading others

Closing, The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come; thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen