

MINISTER'S MESSAGE

SUNDAY, MAY 12, 2019

KNOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

“Waste Not, Want Not”

Based on Psalm 23

*The Lord is my shepherd;
I shall not want (v1)*
~King James Version

Well, hold it right there! I've only read the first verse, and already there is a problem. Because I do want things. I want a lot of things. And I know, as a good Christian sister, that I'm not supposed to want things, or at least too many things, or more than my fair share of things. But I still want things.

Who doesn't want nice clothes, a manicure, or a game of golf at an exclusive resort? Who doesn't want a nice car in the garage instead of a clunker, a hefty pension cheque that rolls into your bank account every month, and an all inclusive vacation once in a while so you can drink pina colodas poolside just like the movie stars on the big screen.

- I want my children to be successful.
- I want to spare them some of the difficult lessons of life.
- I want lots of grandbabies!

- Oh, yes, I almost forgot. I want world peace.

Thankfully, newer translations of the Bible have helped us to better understand the difference between 'want' and 'being in want'.

*The Lord is my shepherd,
I lack nothing. (v1)*
~New International Version

The Lord is my
shepherd,
I shall not want.
~ Psalm 23:1
(King James Version)

Once again, I am stopped in my tracks by the first verse. "With the Lord by my side, there is nothing else that I need." Maybe a few things I want, but nothing I really need.

- He refreshes (v2)
- He keeps me honest (v3)
- He walks with me in the dark places (v4)
- He gives me courage in the scary places (v5)

- He reminds me that I have everything that is really important (v5)

Every day, God reminds me with the beauty of His creation: the tickle of grass on my feet, the cool water of a brook, and the vibrant colour of the tulips, that life is good, and to breathe it in deeply.

Every day God taps my shoulder when my ego and my pride begin to rear their ugly heads making me long for things too far out of my reach. He invites me to count my blessings and give thanks for all I have.

Every day, God pulls me from my discouragement and disappointments, and says, "Do not linger here. There is no happiness to be found."

Every day, God straightens my backbone to make that difficult call, or to wear that smile that is only skin deep. And when it is my turn to walk through the 'darkest nights of the soul' He holds my hand, even if all others have turned away.

Every day, God reminds me that all I ever really needed to understand could be found right back at Verse 1:

*"God, my shepherd!
I don't need a thing." (v1)*
~The Message

- For those who have lived full lives with our Saviour, these words bring comfort.
- For those who have been lost and now are found, these words have become a lifeline.
- For those who seek, yet are timid, these words bring hope and possibility.

But what do these words say to our families today? Your family? My family? What do these words say to a world that often finds these simple principals naïve and outdated?

In the ancient Hebrew, there is a little used definition of the word 'want' from Verse 1, which is not "to want" (like gimme-gimme-gimmie) and is not "in want" (or being in need) but means instead:

- to diminish
- to fail
- to push lower

So let's rephrase the familiar, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want..."

- The Lord is my shepherd. And that is a love you cannot take that away from me.
- The Lord is my shepherd. And because of that, I cannot fail.

- The Lord is my shepherd. And because of that, I am important.

These ancient, quiet meanings speak of confidence, character, justice. These meanings go much deeper than simply doing an inventory of the 'things' we have and the 'things' we would like to have. And may I suggest that these meanings could have an impact on our families and our communities and our society.

- What would happen if we made a concerted effort to lift up people, instead of pulling them down?
- What would happen if we exclusively shared positive stories on the evening news, instead of only in the last thirty seconds of the broadcast?
- What would happen if we deliberately looked at the black sheep of our family and befriended them instead of ridiculing them behind their back?
- What would happen if we stopped keeping score on things, or how many times someone has hurt your feelings?
- What would happen if we attempted to mirror our Shepherd, and became a shepherd for others, in matters of faith, and in matters of life?

The results, I suspect, might look something like this...

- Calming of troubled waters, and cooling of tempers.
- Respect for others, and expectation of good.
- Good friends who hold on in low places.
- A clear voice for fairness.
- A reminder that everyone is important, valued, and cared for.

Our society will continue to challenge us, and surprise us. Our families will continue to challenge us, and surprise us. Our society is filled with our families.

Society needs a shepherd. Families need a shepherd. The Lord is our shepherd. Can you be a shepherd?

Amen.