

**Preaching Christ....
...by the power of the Holy Spirit
...and the authority of the Word of God**

Date: 20 January 2019
Services: 730, 930 Tewantin and Peregian (via video)
Series: The Riches of Psalm 23
Passage: Psalm 23:5
Title: A table with enemies

Outline

1. Why a table with enemies?
2. Who wants to be anointed?

INTRODUCTION

- How is 2019 going for you so far?
- This is just the third Sunday – the year is still young...
- But I wonder whether our summer Psalm – the beautiful Psalm 23 has resonated with you in some unique way....?
- Perhaps you been called on to **trust** the Shepherd in new and deeper ways?
- Perhaps you've been particularly aware of the **green pastures** and **quiet waters** to which you've been led and you're very grateful...?
- Perhaps you've felt particularly guided on **right paths**... and you're thankful for that – humbled by that!
- Perhaps you've walked through the valley of the shadow of death **already** this year... or you are right now - and you've felt the comfort of his presence in **marvellous** ways... //
- But on the **flip** side... there may be others here who feel their trust has already been **stretched**?
- Perhaps you've had reason to question the **reality** of the Psalm... perhaps you've wanted to call out to God – and say – well – I'm **NOT** satisfied – I **don't understand** – in fact I don't **LIKE** where you're leading me...! // I **AM** afraid...? //
- That's **OK**...! As long as you keep talking to him... following him.... Looking to him.... //
- I so appreciated Gavin's message of two weeks ago when he reminded us of the sheer **bliss** of what God provides for us...
- And both Peter Bloomfield's and Ruth Craven's messages of last week were both wonderful... and we saw the timely reminder that because Jesus has taken the **reality** of death for us, we face only the shadow and he well able to lead us through it... //
- I hope that this January you will continue to wrestle with this Psalm and all that it means for us...
- We've called the series 'the **Riches** of Psalm 23' – for the riches of this Psalm are many and you will be greatly blessed the more you meditate on them.
- But this morning as we come to **v5**, we come to a part of the Psalm I think we often gloss **over**, without giving it much thought...
- We love last week's verse about walking through the valley of the shadow of death and fearing no evil...

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- ...but then there's this bit about a "table with enemies" and being "anointed with oil... "?
- ...and we think – well I don't really get that - but it doesn't matter – we **ignore** or skip **over** the verse so we can get to the **goodness** and **love following** us all the days of our life and **dwelling** in God's house for **ever!** //
- So it's good to slow down a bit this morning... for there are great riches in **this** verse too – even if they are not as readily **accessible**...
- Two simple questions form my outline:
 1. **Why a table "with enemies"?**
 2. **Who wants to be anointed?**
- 1. **A table with enemies?**
 - Look with me at the verse – v5 - *You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.*
 - There are certainly a few ways of understanding this verse!
 - So one through is that as the sheep have emerged from the valley of the shadow of death... remember it was something they would venture **THROUGH**...
 - ...and **on** the other side... the shepherd has prepared grass lands for the sheep to refresh the sheep and so that they might be well fed.. perhaps even removing noxious weeds from the grass... so he's preparing a table for them in that sense... and even though there were enemies still lurking **around** – yet because of the presence of the shepherd – they feel **safe enough** – **secure** enough to **eat**... ///
 - But – **somehow** – that doesn't leave me all that **satisfied** and I can't help thinking that there is **more** going on here...
 - What does the whole **table** image raise for you...?
 - If you know your Bible... (and I pray God that you know your Bible and more and more and love it more and more) – you may be reminded of the many images there are of **feasts** in the **Bible**...
 - In fact – you just have to recall the other Bible reading/s read for us – about the end time **wedding supper** of the **Lamb of God**...
 - Or there is **Jesus'** story in **Luke** of the **wedding banquet**...
 - Or again **Jesus'** words at the Lord's Supper about him not drinking wine again until he drinks it anew with his disciples in his **Father's Kingdom**... ///
 - So I wonder whether King David has shifted the image from **shepherd** to **HOST**... and therefore the **valley** of the **shadow** of **death**.... And that death has in fact **occurred**... but death in fact is the gateway to the end time feast of eternity!! So he has prepared a table for us!!
 - It speaks of **celebration** – of **joy** – of **relief**.... //
 - But why '*in the presence of enemies*'?
 - Is the picture of them watching on grumpily as **you** enjoy a feast? //. I don't think so...!
 - Under what circumstances do you think you will sit and enjoy a meal in the **presence** of **enemies**?

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- When you're **reconciled** to them!
- This is what David **anticipated** – and he certainly had many enemies over the course of his life.
- To be able to sit down at such a table with **confidence**, knowing that you will be **secure**, is **reassuring** and **comforting**.
- There were certain times in Israel's history where we see one-time enemies, now feasting together...
- **Joseph's** favour with Pharaoh,
- **Daniel's** favour with the **King of Babylon**
- **Jehoiachin**, exiled **King of Judah**, eating **daily** at the king of **Babylon's table**... //
- Being reconciled with enemies to the point of sharing a **meal** together is a **beautiful picture**... **isn't it??**
- We this explored in the end-time passages of Isaiah...
- Stay with me here... (sermons – two ways – I work hard at preparing... meal – crab or lobster – worth it! – and sometimes as we feed on the word of God – have to invest a little more brain power... but boy it is worth it... CMS Summer School – through Jeremiah – 7 talks took notes... to help me listen better!)
- **Isaiah 11** – when the prophet promises a shoot from the stump of Jesse – that is – a great one in the **line of David**... who will judge **righteously** and bring forth **justice**... speaking of the **coming of Jesus** at the end of all time.. what do we read?
- Isaiah 11:6 - *The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them.*
- ...at that time when *the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea*... Isaiah 11:9b
- Of course it is **rich** in imagery... but the point is that **enemies** will be **enemies no more!!** //
- That's the whole point of the **gospel** isn't it?
- Wasn't it while we were still **enemies** that **Christ died** for us?
- those of us who have turned from our **own ways** and put our **trust** in Jesus - then we are all **one** in Christ Jesus...
- In the **family of God** – in this **room** this morning – there ought to be **no** enmity between members of God's family...!
- The gospel is one of **reconciliation** – reconciliation to **God** and **thereby, reconciliation to one another!**
- That's what it will be like at the **end** – in the **new creation**...
- All who **love** Jesus will **be there** – and we will be **perfected** and **unified** in our relationship with the **Lord Jesus**...
- our **enemies** – if they **too** have **repented** and serve **Jesus** – will be our **friends**...!
- And this **holy communion** which we are about to share this morning – is an **expression** – a **preview** – a **foretaste** – an **anticipation** - of that **end time feast!**

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- And we should take part in it this morning with a great and deep **joy**, knowing that by Jesus' death and resurrection we who were once **enemies** of **God**, are now his very **children**!! ... and we ought to be **joyfully looking forward** to **that** feast which we'll share with Jesus in **eternity**... //
- *You spread a table before me in the presence of my enemies...*
- There are implications for us aren't there...?
- Namely that if you **love Jesus** – but there is someone here you're not **talking to** or against whom you hold a **grievance**... don't you **dare** share in the **communion** this morning... because if you are at war with someone **here who also loves Jesus** – that goes against **everything** the communion **stands for**!!
- If Jesus himself could say – speaking about old covenant sacrifice- *Therefore, if you are offering your gift [] and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, ²⁴ leave your gift there [] ... first go and be **reconciled** to them; **then** come and offer your gift...* how much more does this speak to us who have been **reconciled to God** by the **sacrificial death** of our **Lord Jesus Christ**?
- Leave **pettiness** behind when you come **here**!!
- Leave the **ways** of the **world** which hold **grudges** and plans **revenge** – leave them **behind**...!! //
- We're going to spend **eternity** together.... That's a long time!! We need to **love** and **forgive** and **reconcile** **NOW**! //
- *You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies...* said David, picturing for us... perhaps more than he knew at the time... but a **amazing** picture of life in the **new creation**.. which we look forward to, with **joyful anticipation**.
- Well secondly this morning:

2. Who wants to be anointed?

- Not me...
- It would be messy wouldn't it??
- And what oil would you use??
- Olive oil? Peanut? Something else?
- Let's have a look at the verse - *You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.*
- Again there are different ways of understanding this... some think that just as shepherds used oil on sheep to protect them from nose flies and other bugs etc... this speaks of the Lord's protection from sin and other things which would as it were infect our relationship with God... but again – I don't find that convincing...
- and as with the **table** image – remember – it's likely that the picture has **shifted** from **shepherd** to **host**... and it is best explored with *that* in mind... //
- Now we know **Kings** in the Old Testament were **anointed**.... You'll remember Samuel lining up all of Jesse's boys... none of them fit the bill until Jesse brought the youngest one who had been tending sheep in the field... David... and Samuel anointed him as King...
- But anointing in the ancient world wasn't only used for setting aside **kings**...

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- It was a way of **honouring** your guests... try it for your next dinner party...!
- It probably served a practical purpose – because the oils were **perfumed** – it was probably designed to **freshen you up** from your journey most likely on **foot**... so perhaps – equivalent – spraying your guests with perfume as they walk in...! Mind you – they may be insulted by that!!!
- On one occasion in Luke 7 the Pharisees were annoyed that a woman had broken open a jar of perfume and was pouring it over Jesus' feet.
- Jesus said in response to the protests of his host - *Simon, "Do you see this woman? I came into your house. You did not give me any water for my feet, but she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. 45 You did not give me a kiss, but this woman, from the time I entered, has not stopped kissing my feet. 46 You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet.*
- Simon had failed the good **host** test... and Jesus' comments suggest that anointing the heads of guests – along with washing their feet – was **pretty standard practice** and just **good hospitality**.
- David says *you anoint my head with oil, my cup overflows... //*
- With **what** is his **cup overflowing**? //
- Too much **oil** used in the anointing?? //
- Again if you know your Bible – you may recall the association between **oil** and **gladness** – or **oil** and **joy**...
- In Isaiah 61 – the coming Messiah proclaims that the Lord has anointed him to proclaim the **good news** to the **poor**... set **captives free**, bind up the **broken-hearted**.... **Comfort** those who **mourn**.. and to bestow on God's people a crown of **beauty** instead of **ashes**, the **OIL OF JOY** instead of **mourning**.... A garment of **praise** instead of a spirit of **despair**... and they (God's people) will be called '**oaks of righteousness**' for the **display** of God's **splendour**... //
- That is – in **God's glorious new creation** – remember – no more **pain** or **tears** or **death** – no – there will be **beauty, joy, praise** and **righteousness**!!
- What is pictured here for us in Psalm 23 - and remember – it is **picture language** – but what is **pictured** is a complete **reversal** or **overturning** of the **sorrows** and **troubles** and **sadnesses** of **this** world...
- ...we will **instead** be anointed with the oil of **joy** – so much so – that our cup will be **full** and **overflowing**! – **full** and **overflowing** with **joy**!!!
- That's what life will be **like** in the **new creation**!! //
- But – like with **every** aspect of the new creation – we know it in **part** now... because of the Holy Spirit **indwelling** our **hearts**...
- Just as we know in **part** now the beauty of being reconciled to **enemies**... and just as the **Lord's Supper** is an anticipation of the **end-time feast**...
- So **now** – walking more **closely** with the Lord Jesus – **resting** in him – **obeying** him – **following** the shepherd – **submitting** to him – keeping our eyes on **him** – will result in ever increasing **JOY**!
- Remember that **joy** is a part of the fruit of the Spirit...? – along with *love, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,* ²³ *gentleness and self-control* (Galatians 5)

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- Do you know increasing **joy?** – even **overflowing joy** – as you **trust** in **Jesus?** – walk closely with him? – keeping your eyes on him....? You **WILL!!** **That's his promise!!**
- Stop looking for it anywhere else but in Jesus!!!
- Well let's see where we've come this morning...

- The Lord is my shepherd, I **shall not want** – there is **nothing** I lack... ///
- *You prepare a **table** before me in the **presence** of my **enemies**... you **anoint** my head with **oil**, my **cup overflows**... //*
- Here's what I want you to take **home today**.... //
- In the middle of **all** that you are **facing**... **stresses** and **strains**... **uncertainties** about **this** and **that**... **sickness, pain, depression**... concerns for your **children**... heading back to **school** or **uni**... concerns for **yourself** heading back in to the full **swing** of a **new year**...
- First, keep in mind God's end-time **promises**... where we will **FEAST** with **him** – in **total security** – and in **perfect relationship** with **all** those who have also been **reconciled** to him...
- And remember that **church now** – this **morning** – and **next week** and **through the week** – is meant to be a **joyful anticipation** of that **end-time feast** – **especially** as we come to **communion** this **morning**... //
- **Second**... remember the **end time JOY** – poured out in **so much abundance** that your **cup** will be **full** and **overflowing**... //
- That may be a long way from how you're feeling **today**... but the more you **walk** with **Jesus** – **love** him – **trust** him – **live** for him – find **contentment** in him – **submit** to him – **revel** in him // – the **greater** will be your **joy** – yes – **full** and **overflowing!**