

## ...JESUS RESCUES

### **Psalm 23**

#### **Intro**

Our opening passage is one that most people who have heard anything from the Bible know at least somewhat. Many of us are able to repeat it from memory. But do we really hear it? Do we really hear how in how God is revealed (and He is), that the world is also described, and what is described reflects the reality that we do know: that there are a lot of tough things that we face. As you hear these very familiar words, hear the truths that are spoken, hear all of them, and know that they are for you. The scripture reads this way.

#### **Psalm 23**

<sup>1</sup> The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. <sup>2</sup> He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside still waters; <sup>3</sup> he restores my soul. He leads me in right paths for his name's sake.

<sup>4</sup> Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil; for you are with me; your rod and your staff—they comfort me.

<sup>5</sup> You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. <sup>6</sup> Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord my whole life long.

### **John 16:16-33**

#### **Intro**

Our second passage wraps up with one of the verses that we focused on during our week shipwrecked on the VBS island. The verse is powerful, and it's power is only amped up all the more when we start to hear some of the lead up to it. The way that the Gospel of John sets it up these verses are part of the discourse that Jesus has with his disciples after the Last Supper and just prior to heading out to the Garden where he was ultimately arrested. You can hear the disciples' confusion as they try and figure out exactly what their friend, what their Master is talking about. The funny thing is, even when they think they have it figured out, they don't. That's when this amazing statement of affirmation takes place: 'take courage; I have conquered the world'. The scripture reads this way.

#### **John 16:16-33**

<sup>16</sup> 'A little while, and you will no longer see me, and again a little while, and you will see me.'  
<sup>17</sup> Then some of his disciples said to one another, 'What does he mean by saying to us, "A little while, and you will no longer see me, and again a little while, and you will see me"; and "Because I am going to the Father"?' <sup>18</sup> They said, 'What does he mean by this "a little while"? We do not know what he is talking about.'  
<sup>19</sup> Jesus knew that they wanted to ask him, so he said to them, 'Are you discussing among yourselves what I meant when I said, "A little while, and you will no longer see me, and again a little while, and you will see me"?' <sup>20</sup> Very truly, I tell you, you will weep and mourn, but the world will rejoice; you will have pain, but your pain will turn into joy. <sup>21</sup> When a woman is in labour, she has pain, because her hour has come. But when her child is born, she no longer remembers the anguish because of the joy of having brought a human being into the world. <sup>22</sup> So you have pain now; but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you. <sup>23</sup> On that day you will ask nothing of me.

Very truly, I tell you, if you ask anything of the Father in my name, he will give it to you. <sup>24</sup>Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be complete.

25 'I have said these things to you in figures of speech. The hour is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figures, but will tell you plainly of the Father. <sup>26</sup>On that day you will ask in my name. I do not say to you that I will ask the Father on your behalf; <sup>27</sup>for the Father himself loves you, because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God. <sup>28</sup>I came from the Father and have come into the world; again, I am leaving the world and am going to the Father.'

29 His disciples said, 'Yes, now you are speaking plainly, not in any figure of speech! <sup>30</sup>Now we know that you know all things, and do not need to have anyone question you; by this we believe that you came from God.' <sup>31</sup>Jesus answered them, 'Do you now believe? <sup>32</sup>The hour is coming, indeed it has come, when you will be scattered, each one to his home, and you will leave me alone. Yet I am not alone because the Father is with me. <sup>33</sup>I have said this to you, so that in me you may have peace. In the world you face persecution. But take courage; I have conquered the world!'

### '...Jesus Rescues'

Every Vacation Bible School has similarities to ones we have done before...and each one of them has things that make them feel unique.

For example, VBS, as we have been led to run it, tends to be kind of...loud, there always seems to be at least one day that is ridiculously hot and humid (July anyone?), and the kids are always smiling...even when they are soaking wet from one of the activities.

But then there are the things that make them unique: sometimes it's the set (this year's was just slightly awesome), sometimes it's the behavior of the kids (this may shock you, but there have been years when the children were...distracted (this was not one of those years!)), and sometimes it's how the kids connect with the material that is being taught.

It's the last one that I want to talk about.

So you know, the material that we use began to be put together by the publishing company more than two years ago. They then test run it the year before it's offered so that they can tweak it before selling it to churches all around the country...and it was remarkably timely, and felt like it was created for our kids, for our culture, for our community.

Here's the long and the short: Jesus rescues us. When we feel lonely, when we worry, when we struggle, when we do wrong, when we are powerless, Jesus rescues us.

Now, did those promises get wrapped into a really kid friendly package: you betcha!

Does that make them any less true for each of us here today? Absolutely not!

Look, we live in a world that is increasing isolated, even as we find more and more ways to be perpetually connected via social media: statistics are starting to bear out in what we are able to speak about in the world around us, let alone our own lives, you know, if we were willing to acknowledge it.

Because the reality is, that there are a whole lot of days when we aren't willing. There are a whole lot of days when we look around at the world that we have helped to create, see that it's broken and then go

right back to the things that make our lives feel lonely, worrisome, a struggle where all we seem to do is wrong and we are powerless to do anything about it. We just put our head back down and in doing so help to perpetuate the behaviors that make us feel that way to begin with.

Our kids (and the adults around them as well) in so many ways feel like no one really gets them, that they are not loved. We might not ever say it out loud...but its there.

God promises that's not true. Jesus rescues!

Our kids (and the adults around them as well) worry and struggle with the world in this, that, and the other way. Sometimes we worry that we aren't good enough, or that the brokenness and hatred that we hear and feel in the world has already won the day and that we are powerless to do anything to really stop it, or at the very least that whatever we could do, really won't amount to all that much.

God promises that's not true. Jesus rescues!

Our kids were reminded of God's promises that that doesn't have to be the end of the story: we don't have to feel like we are stuck on an island, unable to do anything beyond talk to a volleyball that we've painted a face on (Anyone? Anyone?).

So, do you feel lonely? Do you worry? Do you struggle? Do you do wrong? Do you feel powerless?

If you answered yes, or even, 'well, sometimes', then hear again verse 33 of the 16<sup>th</sup> chapter of John: 'Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world.' Jesus said that to his friends; Jesus says that to us.

And why does it matter? Because Jesus overcoming the world was not some kind of 'look at me' power trip: it was done for you, for me, for all of us. It was done so that our lives might be able to be transformed; it was done so that we might know that this life is not the end of the story; it was done so that our lives might be complete, not feel complete, be complete, as we love God and neighbor as we love the person who we see when we look in the mirror. God overcame the world so that we might be complete: Jesus rescues.

So an interesting thing happened at VBS this year. On Friday morning, I saw one of our campers come through the doors of the sanctuary with his mom and his sister holding a Ziploc bag filled with , nickels, dimes, pennies, quarters and dollar bills.

Now the collection of a noisy offering is something that we do every year with the offering that is received being sent to a charity of the church's choice. This year we decided to send the money down to Sou-sa-vant, Haiti (the community that we have partnered with Hope Force International to help serve since the earthquake, now over five years ago) with the offering being earmarked to help build a school.

Here's the thing: it was a really big Ziploc bag, and it was jammed. I looked at his mom and I said, 'that's awesome!' And she said back, 'he's been fundraising.' She then told me that he had been selling pictures that he had been coloring for whatever donation he could receive, as well as creating fundraising videos to send to his family and friends...and his parents family and friends. It was funny; it was incredibly awesome; it was a moment when I got to watch the power of God flow through one child

in a particularly powerful way. And for what it's worth, the goal of this year's VBS was to raise \$250 for the school. We were at \$195 on Thursday afternoon. We finished Friday with \$452. There were a lot of big Ziploc bags. God overcame the world so that we might be complete: Jesus rescues.

So, do you feel lonely? Do you worry? Do you struggle? Do you do wrong? Do you feel powerless?

And don't give the answer that you say to the rest of the world to make yourself feel like you measure up to all of those people who have life figured out (most don't...by the way).

Instead, start to be honest, with God...with yourself.

Now be reminded of the promise: Jesus has told us that he has overcome the world...and he did it for us! And when the power of God flows, it shows up in ways that we expect...and ways that catch us complete unprepared. Jesus rescues.

All this week we were able to spread seeds, seeds that spoke of the promises of God for the lives of our kids. As we watched through the week, what I saw was that at least some of those seeds started to take root.

Well, those promises are just as pertinent and valuable for all of the adult-sized people as well. Jesus overcame the world...for us. All of that stuff that leaves you feeling...less, Jesus is able to rescue us from it, when we allow him in.

You don't have to be on an island alone: Jesus overcame the world so that we might be complete. Jesus rescues!

### **After Sermon Prayer**

Holy and gracious God, You have blessed this week's VBS with the promises that your son is able to rescue us loneliness, worry, struggle, doing wrong, and feeling powerless. He doesn't make those things disappear, but he walks with us and shows us how to navigate them to live, really live life. We thank You for these promises and that they are true for our lives, right here and right now. Your son has overcome the world...for us. It is in his name that we do pray. Amen.