

Weekly Study of Sunday's Message.

Sunday May 17, 2020 "Surely it was happening all around us, it's true...and we couldn't see it. Surely goodness and mercy will follow me."

I Intro.

Welcome to the weekly devotional that gives you some specific things to work through from the message this Sunday. Whether you were able to watch the live stream service or not, this devotional is free-standing and you can still use it to help you dig deeper into your own spiritual walk.

Take as long as you need to dive into this material and feel free to share it.

So, still hanging in there? Sunday was our tenth Sunday of not meeting. That's a really long time. We are still plugging along. Taking care of things behind the scenes, working on both providing opportunities for growth and learning, taking care of the facilities at the church, and preparing for that eventual time in the future when we can gather again. And there are real conversations in that direction. If there is ANYTHING you need, prayer, ideas or suggestions you have, please pass them our way. We feel just as isolated as you, and we want to maintain that connection with each of you.

II Sunday.

Sunday was our third Sunday in our "Surely" series. A look at truths in scripture we may not have been aware of, promises of God, benefits for our life, that once we discover them force us to see the world, and our relationship in it differently. So far we've talked about living a life to be open to sensing God's presence even if we're not aware in that moment of him. And also seeing how God can use different people to do his will, and being advocates of others to speak and stand for God.

Sunday, we revisited an old favorite...Psalm 23, and the obvious "surely" line near the end. "*Surely goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life*".

The 23rd psalm is so iconic, so well known, that even people not connected to the church know it. Which makes it difficult to read it and get anything new from it. But, we're going to give it a try, and "surely" we can pull some new truths out of it. Read Psalm 23 and we'll talk a bit.

Did anything new or different jump out to you?

How has this passage ministered you over the years?

Is there anything you may struggle a bit with about this psalm?

In the message Kal shared three things that fit our "surely" theme, we can pull from this passage.

1. It's a journeying passage.

The psalm says; "*Leads me*". "*Guides me*". "*I walk*". David implies pretty powerfully his life is about moving around. Not necessarily always physically or a location. But not bound by wanting comfort and security. It's a recognition of the need and openness to be moved and led by something bigger than us. There is a constant ebb and flow around us, as life changes, and we fully accept that.

Think back about your life. How many different 'lives' have you lived. As a child, teen, young adult, parent, and more?

2. It says there are good times and really hard times.

This is kind of a no-brainer. “*As I walk through the valley of the shadow of death*”. It doesn’t get much darker than that. As you go through life, there will be all sorts of really hard things that happen. I will be super interested in the stories we will tell, and how we will live differently because of this current situation. Our grandmothers didn’t have a bread bag filled with more bread bags, folded aluminum foil, and our grandfather had coffee cans filled with assorted bolts and screws because it was fun. They lived through really hard times, built a new life around adapting to those events. So we recognize and admit that there are really tough times, that will mold and shape who we are and how God will fit into the picture..

Think back on those really tough times in your life. How did you experience God?

How did those experiences with God grow in you the person you are now?

3. God’s presence and care for me is NOT dependent on the things this world can provide.

The central point of this passage, and the “*surely*” I want us to lock onto today. Goodness and mercy are not dependent on stuff. Think about your schedule, 2020 calendar, your understanding of life, your worthiness, or simply doing anything at all. We seek after and chase things of the world thinking they will bring what the “goodness and mercy” of God bring, and then something like this pandemic reminds us all of those things are just...things. Our understanding of the world HAS to shift.

The writer of this psalm says two things that he needs come from God.

GOODNESS- this is the word used to describe creation. Beautiful. To have status as favor. This favor, care, life breathed into creation. “*And it was good*”.

MERCY- unconditional favor and loving kindness. A mother with her child.

There is this way God cares for you that isn’t dependent on how you live. It’s not about being perfect, (David’s life was a train wreck), doing all the do’s, not doing all the don’ts. When I devote, dedicate, align my life, soul, spirit, with God, then “***goodness and mercy will follow me***”, without me having to pursue, seek, hoard, anything. This is a commitment to doing this more important work of enriching and filling the inner life. They will follow, pursue, run to stay with me, even if I’m not paying attention. I may not notice them, make use of them, but they are always there.

How would you define “goodness and mercy”?

How have those been what you really needed in those tough moments?

III Challenge.

These are really tough times. We’ve been holed up, in one way or another, for two and a half months now. And we have no idea what the future will look like. We have this desire to get back to our lives, but we know things will not look the same. And we will want to try to find external things of the world, to fill those voids in our lives having to figure out what the new normal looks like. However, this very famous psalm tells us that what we really need, to handle the difficult times, to keep going can only come from God. It’s about the inner world, not surrounding ourselves with the things of the world.

So, what specific things can and will you do as we begin to try to figure out our new lives to find goodness and mercy from God in your own lives?