



SUNDAY SERMON

Psalm 23

DATE

Easter 4
Sunday, May 12, 2019

PREACHER

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When I was asked to give this senior sermon, I was presented with two paths I could go down: I could speak about one of the passages we have heard, or share my faith story. I've heard many of your faith stories over the years, and like yours, mine is complicated. I felt daunted trying to decipher my journey with God; so, I thought I'd take a shot at blending the two options using Psalm 23 to help guide my story.

I've got changes coming up in my life. I'm heading off to college in the fall. Reading through Psalm 23 was the perfect reminder of how instrumental my faith, and the St. Columba community has been for me, and will continue to be, as I head out on my slightly terrifying journey away from home. I would like to go back and reread Psalm 23 for all of you before I jump into my takeaways.

*The Lord is my shepherd;
I shall not be in want.
He makes me lie down in green pastures
and leads me beside still waters.
He revives my soul
and guides me along right pathways for his Name's sake.
Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I shall fear no evil;
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff, they comfort me.
You spread a table before me in the presence of those who trouble me;
you have anointed my head with oil,
and my cup is running over.
Surely your goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life,
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.*

Psalm 23

There are three specific lines from this passage that I'd like to dive into with you as they make me think of this congregation, my faith, and this special place that we've shared over the years.

The first line I felt especially connected to was the 5th and 6th line: "He revives my soul and guides me along right pathways for his Name's sake." I have been coming to St. Columba's since Kindergarten. Through the strong youth program, from Sunday School and pilgrimages, this church has had a hand in guiding me through my entire life and teaching me how to be an individual. This church has been a safe place where I am free to explore and grow as one of God's children. It's a place where I feel better walking out than when I walked in. And it's a restorative place for me and I hope it is or can be for you.

continued

I'm grateful for how it revives my soul. I've walked into this building many Sunday mornings with a heavy mind. Something or other had me worried, confused, or upset. I've often found peace here with you, with the music, with the teachings. And numerous times I've felt clarity of purpose regarding issues that only a couple hours prior had me down. I'm heading off with the confidence to take on an entirely new environment knowing that he will continue to revive my soul and guide me along righteous pathways. I'm also taking big comfort in that you, St. Columba, will be right here when I get back.

The second part of this Psalm I felt represented God's love and our communities love were lines 7-9: "I shall fear no evil; for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me." I am not, and will not, be alone in times of trial. Three years ago, my grandfather died from cancer. I was devastated for he was a major force in my life. But in the same way David believed that God was always with him and found comfort in knowing that, I did too. Knowing that my grandfather was with God, and God was with me helped me stay connected to my grandfather and less alone throughout my grieving process.

When he died, my family and I felt especially supported by St. Columba's. The church called us to check in on us, you prayed for us, and you prayed for my grandfather. This meant a lot to us. It comforted us to be reminded that we were a part of the St. Columba community when we needed it. We are never alone for we have God always loving us and this amazing community supporting us through each endeavour.

The final line, which would be impossible not to talk about, is the last line of Psalm 23: "Surely your goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the House of the Lord forever." I love this line! We all face challenges and changes in our lives. This line reminds us that, through it all, God will be by our side. How good is that? As I head off next year, I know God will follow me and continue to guide me as I enter this next chapter of my life. God's love is constant and unconditional. Through all of the uncertainties and inconsistencies in our life, God is our rock, our foundation, something we can always count on. It also reminds us that there will always be a place for us in the House of the Lord. God will continue to love us through these changes and obstacles, and he will accept us as we are forever.

Like I said in the beginning, my faith story is complicated, as are many people's. Everything has not been crystal clear, however each story shares two common threads which are that "it's all about love" and "we are not alone". I believe that if we can find a way to keep coming back to that love and sense of togetherness, no matter how far away we move from this building and each other, we will be golden.