

The Sacred with Skin On

A Children's Story about Anointing Based on Psalm 23

Psalm 23, the part of the Bible we are reading today, is a song, written by King David a loooooong time ago. It's about a Shepherd taking care of his sheep. David thought that the way a shepherd looked after sheep is kind of how God takes care of us. King David probably sang it, and maybe it sounded like this

(A member of congregation begins singing a version of "The Lord is my Shepherd")

But today, [child's name] and I are going to read it to you slowly. Listen carefully. Can you hear things the Shepherd does to take care of the sheep?

Psalm 23

Storyteller: The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want.

Child: He makes me lie down in green pastures;
he leads me beside quiet waters; he restores my soul.

Storyteller: He leads me in right paths for his name's sake.

Child: Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil;

Storyteller: for you are with me;
your rod and your staff--they comfort me.

Child: You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;

Storyteller: you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

Child: Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life,

Storyteller: and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

(Have some conversation about what the children noticed that the Shepherd did for the sheep: provisions of food, water, safety, etc.)

Did you notice that the Shepherd also anoints the sheep? That means he put oil on its cuts. At the end of the day when the Shepherd gathered all the sheep back into the fold, he would check each one for cuts on their skin and would put oil on the cuts to make sure they would heal. The Shepherd does all these things to show the sheep how much he loves them. When you get hurt, does anybody take care of your cuts? What do they do? How else do they show that they love you? How do you show people that you love them?

Did you know that sometimes at church, we anoint people? Not because we have cuts that need to get better, but because it's a special way to show how much Jesus loves us. Usually

we use plain olive oil, and we put a little bit on our finger and we make a cross on each other's forehead or hand, a sign that reminds us of Jesus' love, or blessing.

Later on in the service, we're going to offer anointing. If you want to, you can come up and be anointed. I will put some oil on my finger and make a cross on your forehead or hand and then say some special words to you. This is one of the ways that we show God's love in the church.

Prayer:

God, our Shepherd,
thank you for the love you show us,
and the love we can show each other. Amen

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