

Introduction: There is a new commercial out promoting “Beats” headphones by Dr. Dre and it features the quarterback of the San Francisco 49ers, Colin Kaepernick walking into the stadium of his opponent with hundreds of intimidating fans screaming at him. Rather than giving attention to them, thanks to his noise cancelling BEATS headphones, Mr. Kaepernick cannot hear a thing. But that’s not all, in order to sell the product, they have to portray an image right. The song that is blaring through his headphones is “The Man” by Aloe Blacc with the catchy phrase: “You can tell everybody, go ahead and tell everybody, you can tell everybody, I’m the man, I’m the man, I’m the man.” What is the image Beats wants to portray? Confidence.

Are you a confident person? If not, why not? If so, how so? In other words, if you lack confidence do you know why? If you are loaded with confidence, why are you so confident? Did you know God desires for us to be confident? He wants us to live each day with confidence. I’m very confident of that. What if having confidence had everything to do with your view of God?

A clear vision of God inspires confidence. God desires for us to find everything we need for life through our knowledge of him (2 Pet 1:3). Confidence, security, hope, and peace all come from obtaining a holistic understanding of God. Listen to Isaiah 40 as we seek to obtain a clear vision of God.

“Behold your God!”

- **Go on up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good news; lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good news; lift it up, fear not; say to the cities of Judah, “Behold your God!” (Isaiah 40:9)**

God is Great!

- **“Behold, the Lord God comes with might, and his arm rules for him; behold, his reward is with him, and his recompense before him.” (Isaiah 40:10)**
- God is strong. He is King. God is a great God, but what does the very next verse say?

God is Gracious!

- **“He will tend his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms; he will carry them in his bosom, and gently lead those that are with young. (Isaiah 40:11)**
- God is caring. He is Shepherd. God is a gracious God.

{P} This is our God, great and gracious. The opening sermon on the greatness of God and this final sermon on the graciousness of God serve as appropriate bookends on this series designed to drive us into the heart of God. And here’s why: We need a God who is Great! AND we need a God who is gracious!

Psalm 23 paints a portrait of this God of grace.

“God is Gracious” Psalm 23

Not surprisingly, it will encourage us to . . .

The Point: Place complete confidence in our Shepherd God who abounds with grace.

Read Psalm 23 (TOGETHER – ALOUD)

I. Rest in the gracious leadership of our Shepherd God (Psalm 23:1-4).

Do you see the relationship between God as Shepherd & David as the sheep

The Lord is my Shepherd

- He makes me lie down, he leads me, he restores, he leads me, he is with me. His rod, his staff comfort me.
- All of this is grace... Grace takes the first step. Grace initiates. God, in his grace, moves toward us, when we had neither the desire nor capacity to move toward him.

T: Though God is the main character, David, who was a shepherd before he became King, speaks of the personal benefits he receives from God.

Man

- Sheep = David = Us!
- When Israelites spoke of God, it was usually in a corporate sense: "The Lord is our God. He is God over Israel, his people."
- But we need to understand: God is God over all of his people, and God is God over each one of his people.
- God relates us in an intensely personal way. So we read: "The Lord is *my* Shepherd. *I* shall not want. He make *me*. He leads *me*. He restores *my*
- His love and care for us should be received and enjoyed in the most intimate way.

Trans: Let's consider the ways our Shepherd God cares for us.

Our Shepherd God cares through his provision.

- "I shall not want..." God does not always give us everything we want, but he does give us what we need.
- Our Shepherd has unlimited resources at his disposal. Have you ever wanted to purchase something for someone but lacked the resources? God never has that problem. He gives what we need, and then some!
- "He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters."
- Here we have the picture of God providing for the necessities of our lives: food, water, and rest.
- **"Oh, fear the Lord, you his saints, for those who fear him have no lack!" (Psalm 34:9)**

Our Shepherd God cares through his guidance.

- Read *verses 2 & 3*.

"He restores my soul."

- God's restoring touch brings a renewed sense of strength and vitality. When you are weary and weak, ask God to restore you soul. He is the one who brings us back to the place of wholeness and flourishing.

"He leads me in paths of righteousness"

- Lit. he leads us in right paths. He leads us in the way we should go and these paths will be righteous paths and result in glorifying God.
- Every thing we do, every path we travel is ALL "for his name's sake"
- Where do you need guidance in your life? When I pray for friends as they are making life decisions and, at times, struggling with the future, this is the image I most often to come to: God is our Good Shepherd. He leads us where he wants us to go and it his ways are good.

Our Shepherd God cares for us through his presence.

"I will fear no evil."

- Last week we talked about the presence of evil. No one escapes it. Sometimes God's "straight paths" take us through dark valleys.
- Bad things happen in our fallen world and the presence of these things cause us to fear.
- "I don't know if I've ever experienced a day where I have not feared some measure of evil."
- What do you fear? Death? Financial collapse? A terrifying diagnosis? Rejection?
- Would you take that God? This is what David does.

"For you are with me."

- Who do I roll with? God. I walk with God! Every day. Crazy!
- There is an inverse relationship between our awareness of God's presence and our fear of evil.

- God is with me, I have no need to fear anything that might oppose me.
- His presence is our peace. WE have no reason to fear!
- **“There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear.” (I John 4:18)**

Our Shepherd God cares for us through his protection.

- The rod was used to beat away wild animals. This is what a shepherd does.
- He protects us with his rod and his staff. He protects us from that which would assail us from the outside. And he also protects us from that which assails us from the inside.
- In other words, God keeps us from temptation. This is why we pray: “lead us not into temptation.”
- But God also disciplines us and changes our hearts to reform the evil desires within us.
- And this is a comfort to us. To know God cares for us in such comprehensive manner should bring solace to our souls.

Summary:

- God’s care abounds for his children. Think about this: one of my practices in praying for others is to simplify the approach. So I’ll ask questions like: what is the one thing I can pray for you about these days? What are top two or three prayer needs in your life right now?
- BUT God is not like us. He cares for every detail in our lives and does it simultaneously.

Our Shepherd God loves us. He provides, guides, protects, and is with his children.

The Good Shepherd

If you want to know what God is like, look at Jesus: **“I and the Father are one.” (John 10:30)**

“Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.” (John 14:9)

“No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father’s side, he has made him known. (John 1:18)

This is why Jesus calls himself the Good Shepherd...

Jesus: The Good Shepherd

“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep.” (John 10:11)

Now, what does he mean? Lay down his life? Cross. Why the cross?

Isaiah 53:6 “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way;”

But God loves us so much that he goes and find the one lost sheep out of the 100 in his fold, so that all of heaven rejoices when that one sheep is brought home to the Shepherd.

T: Have you come home to the Good Shepherd? Have you been brought into a vibrant relationship with God? Look on Christ. Trust in him and experience God as your Shepherd. That’s not all we see in these verses. Verse 5-6 tell us we should . . .

II. Receive the gracious invitation to sit at the table of God (23:5-6)

The imagery in verses 5-6 is that of a host inviting someone in a banquet hall.

His grace is undeserved.

I see God making moves, taking the initiative. That’s grace, but is there anything more than this. Do we see grace anywhere else in this passage? Yes!

- This is God’s house. What is anyone doing in God’s house? God has welcomed us into his space. Through Christ, God has extended a GRACIOUS invitation and has welcomed us to *his* banquet table. This should astound us. We don’t belong there. It is completely undeserved and that is the whole point of grace.
- If we don’t stand in awe of this, we are missing something of the potency of God’s love and grace.

- One of the clearest stories Grace in the Bible is found in 2 Samuel 9. It's the story of a feast thrown by King David.
- If anyone did not belong at the King's table, it was Memphibosheth. Memphibosheth belonged to the house of King Saul. David's predecessor and notorious enemy. Added to this, the narrative tells us that Memphisosheth was crippled in both feet. He would been outcast and forsaken by others, but not by David. David showed great kindness and grace to the point where the narrative ends by saying: **"Memphibosheth ate at David's table, like one of the king's sons. . . . So Memphibosheth lived in Jerusalem, for he always ate at the king's table. Now he was lame in both his feet." (2 Samuel 9:11-13)**
- That's me, and if you are in Christ, that is you! We are Memphibosheth! Welcomed into the house of God, our head *anointed* by the host, God himself, a gesture of hospitality reserved for honored guests.
- And then we are seated at his table, which he has prepared for me to come and feast.
- This is so backwards. He should be our guest. We should be serving him. But we should remember that we can never out give God.
- Shouldn't this inspire confidence? A spot at the king's table: Provided for. Loved. Secure.
- I love what Tim Chesters says: **"God is gracious, so we do not have to prove ourselves." - Tim Chester**
- Be freed from having to seek the approval of others. This drives so many people and it usually drives us to a measure of despair!
- And we take a seat at his tables, even when we are in the midst of our enemies.

T: Have you taken your place at the table of God? It's an undeserved feast, and it is completely free!

His grace overflows.

- Have you ever been overwhelmed? "Every day!" Some of you have so much on your plate you simply can't keep up. Maybe it's your situation and circumstances. Some of you are overwhelmed, not by your schedule or situation, but by your sin. Here is good news when you are overwhelmed: your cup overflows!
- Is your cup overflowing? If you have trusted in Yahweh as your Good Shepherd then, positionally, your cup overflows. Look at everything we just read. But let me ask you: are you practically and daily experiencing the overflowing blessing of a vibrant relationship with God?
- The overflowing cup symbolizes how God gives his best to us as his children.
- Pic: Have you ever used a fountain drink machine while in conversation, when all the sudden you feel soft drink running down your hand?
- This is part of the nature of grace. It is comprehensive and abounding!

T: Our last verse, really sums up the whole Psalm and in doing so, teaches us one final truth about grace: "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever." What an incredible statement of confidence!

His grace pursues us.

- Follow me... We think we have to pursue God, and we do. Psalm 73 showed us that the pursuit of God should be the greatest pursuit of our lives. However, as we get to know God, we realize that we only pursue him because HE has first pursued us.
- Verse 6 tells us that God's goodness and mercy follow us, they pursue us, all the days of our lives.
- We get the picture that they are follow us at every turn (high speed chase?). Every step we take, goodness and mercy are trailing behind us and tracking us down. This is the reality for the believer in Christ every single day! Goodness is abounding.. Mercy is abounding . . .
 - Bobby (Custodian)
- *God's grace is pursues us and God's grace is limitless...*
- Because of his grace, we get to dwell in the presence of God and enjoy the privilege of worshipping him forever, where there is fullness of joy (Ps. 16:11).

Conclusion:

Can you just rest in the love and grace of God?

- No one can love you like God. I know it's hard for us to understand this, which is why we have these prayers like Ephesians 3:14-21 that ask that we would know how high, wide, deep, and long is the love of Christ. We need to pray that for one another, and being exposed to passages that hold this kind of intricate detail should help us.
- Now, what happens when we realize how much we are loved by God? Answer: Our love for him grows!
- I want to revisit the Augustine quote from last week. Do you remember it? **"He loves Thee too little who loves anything together with Thee which he loves not for thy sake."** - Augustine
- Augustine calls us to allow all of our other loves in life, our lesser loves, to ascend up and push us toward a greater love and delight in God. You study. For who? You write that love note. (don't play) For who? You host a Super Bowl party. For who?
- Now don't miss the *compounding effect* of this kind of love. When we truly love anything that our love for God might increase, we will discover a deeper love for that lesser love. For example, when you go to work this week, and you delight in your work in a way that helps you to delight in God, you will actually delight in your work more! Studies, relationships, hobbies, children, ministry endeavors, sharing our faith. . .this rule is applicable across the board. And as our love for God our confidence in him, and what he calls us to do, will rise for the sake of his great name.
- God is great. God is glorious. God is good. & God is gracious.

Let's Pray. "God, would you empower us by his grace so that we might live to show your greatness. "

Intro - "In Christ Alone" Confidence . .