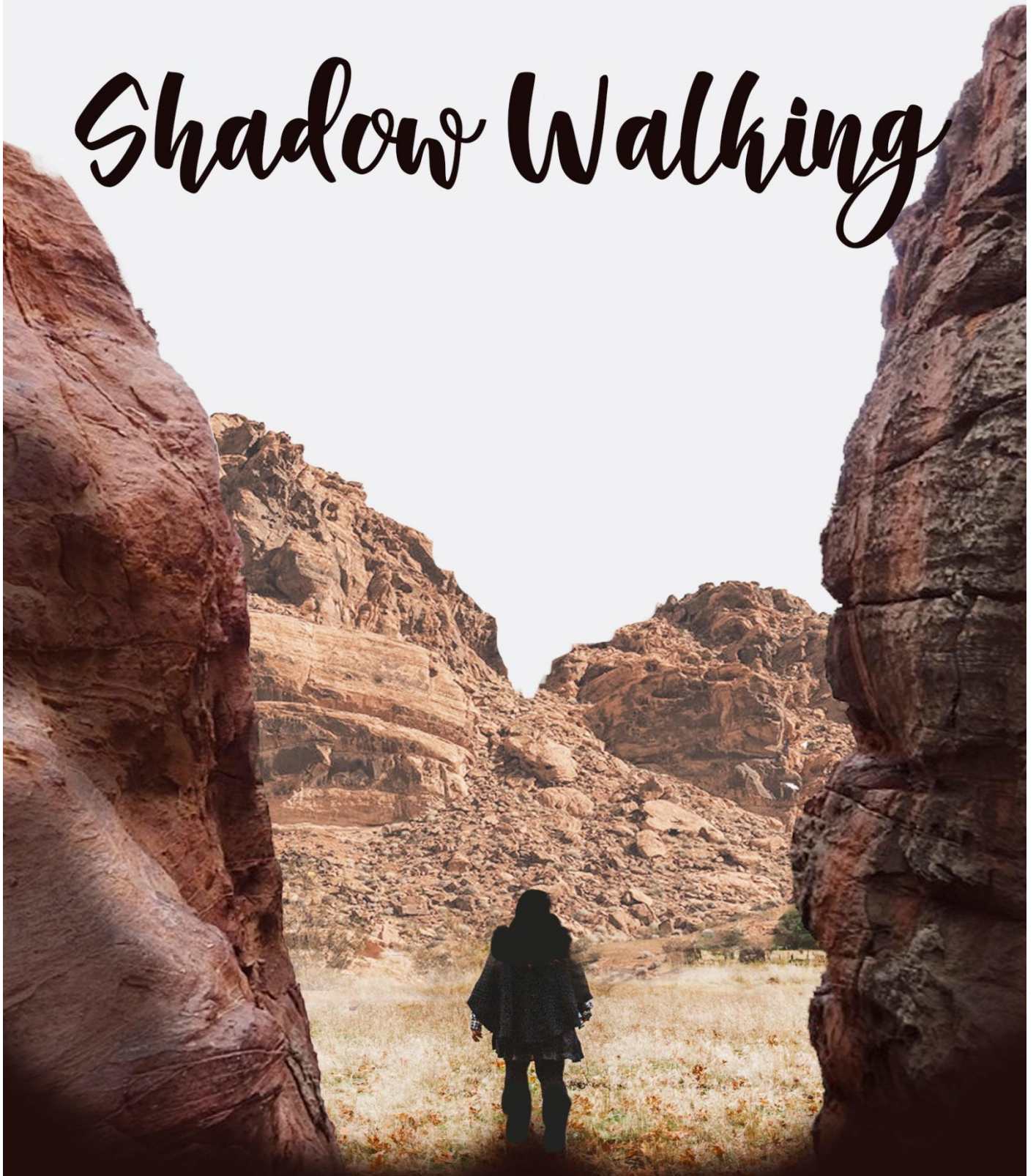


LENT 2019 STUDY BOOK

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF GRANADA HILLS

Shadow Walking



The beauty of scripture is that it can be read over and over and every time, it can mean something different to the reader. Where we are at different stages in our lives enable us to see different messages within the scripture. Hence scripture never grows old and we never stop learning from it. In this 2019 Lent Series, our Pastors will be preaching on Psalm 23. We have studied this scripture in Lent series in the past. This year, I believe, we will get a new lesson - - a new take away from this well-known chapter in the book of Psalms.

In the past, the Lent Studies have gone hand in hand with the scripture the Pastors preach on. This year, we have chosen scripture to accompany the verses in Psalm 23. Our hope is that you look at Psalm 23 in a new light and you gain insight into how beautifully other passages resonate with the messages of Psalm 23.

As believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, we can take courage as we have Saints that have gone before us as examples for Christian living, we can rejoice in knowing that our God is merciful and faithful, and we can be confident in whose shadow we rest. It is written, “In the shadow of your wings I will take refuge.” (Psalm 57:1). We pray that as you delve into this new Lent study you will be refreshed and revived in the newness of the passages and when you need, seek refuge in the Almighty.

This study was made possible by several very committed and caring believers. I am humbled to be a part of an amazing team. Thank you is never quite enough! Due to a lack of better words... Thank you to Pastor Bryant Benitez, Dave Peterman, Nicole Harlow, Ashley Kemme, Marco Palmer, Blane Goldwater, and Vreni Schiess. Once again, thank you for an outstanding job by Stephanie Deach-Foyle for not only sharing her testimony but the awesome cover design and the incomparable Krystal Hoover for tying it all together with a bow! You are my go-to-gals! Thank you also to Erik Harlow for your leadership of Adult Discipleship a daunting role you handle with grace.

Serena Griffith
Small Group Ministry

Lesson 1: First Sunday In Lent, March 10, 2019

The Lord is My Shephard Psalm 23:1-2

Study Passage: John 10:1-18

¹ “Very truly I tell you Pharisees, anyone who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber. ² The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. ³ The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. ⁴ When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. ⁵ But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger’s voice.” ⁶ Jesus used this figure of speech, but the Pharisees did not understand what he was telling them.

⁷ Therefore Jesus said again, “Very truly I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. ⁸ All who have come before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep have not listened to them. ⁹ I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out, and find pasture. ¹⁰ The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life and have it to the full.

¹¹ “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. ¹² The hired hand is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep. So, when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. ¹³ The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.

¹⁴ “I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me—¹⁵ just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep. ¹⁶ I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd. ¹⁷ The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life—only to take it up again. ¹⁸ No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father.”

SCRIPTURE SUMMARY

The Gospel of John is by John, one of the 12 disciples. John is writing to primarily non-Jewish believers and seeking unbelievers. The Gospel of John presents Jesus in powerful ways as revealing who God really is for those who believe in Jesus. John 10 describes Jesus as a good shepherd, watchful and vigilant, with an intimate understanding of the flock, implying Jesus is more than just human. John 10 is a provocative scene challenging us to reconsider, do we know who the Good Shepherd really is?

ICE BREAKERS

1. Name six of the well-known shepherds mentioned in the bible. Why are they “well-known”?
2. Sheep have been described as foolish, slow to learn, demanding, stubborn, wayward, unpredictable, restless and dependent. Do any of these characteristics apply to us?
3. Read Isaiah 53:6. What does this verse say about our relationship with God?

SCRIPTURE INTEPRETATION

1. Jesus is the Good Shephard. His people (followers of Jesus) are the sheep. Who are the thieves and the robbers?
2. Jesus also describes himself as the “gate for the sheep”. What does the “gate” symbolize?
3. What is the result of entering through the gate?
4. In verse 8, is Jesus referring to people like Moses or John the Baptist? Why? Or why not?

5. In verse 16, who are the “other sheep?”

LIFE APPLICATION

1. Is Jesus the only Gate? See John 14:6. How would you explain your answer to a non-believer?
2. If someone called you a sheep, would you take exception? Why? Or why not?
3. How does admitting we are weak (admitting we are sheep) impact our lives?
4. How can we know the difference between God’s voice and the voice of the “wisdom of the world”?
5. Read John 10:9-21. Do these verses clarify, change or confuse your understanding of verses 1-8? Explain.

Lesson 2: Sunday, March 17, 2019

He Leads Me Psalm 23:3 Study Passage: Romans 12

¹ Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. ² Do not conform to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

³ For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you. ⁴ For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, ⁵ so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. ⁶ We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; ⁷ if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; ⁸ if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.

⁹ Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. ¹⁰ Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves. ¹¹ Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. ¹² Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. ¹³ Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.

¹⁴ Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. ¹⁵ Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. ¹⁶ Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.

¹⁷ Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. ¹⁸ If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. ¹⁹ Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. ²⁰ On the contrary:

"If your enemy is hungry, feed him;
if he is thirsty, give him something to drink.

In doing this, you will hear burning coals on his head."

²¹ Do not be overcome by evil but overcome evil with good.

SCRIPTURE SUMMARY

The book of Romans is by Paul to the church in Rome, Italy, which is primarily made up of non-Jewish believers. In Romans, Paul describes the Gospel & God's plan of salvation for all people because of the Good News of Jesus. Romans 12 is a great chapter because Paul has written many powerful ways the Gospel is at work and should be at work in people who believe and follow Jesus. In Romans chapter 12 believers are encouraged to take seriously how their faith is to be practically applied for them personally, in the church community and outside of the church.

ICE BREAKERS

1. How would you define the word "love?" How do you think the world defines "love?"
2. How do you see the love you witnessed growing up affecting your responses today?

SCRIPTURE INTERPRETATION

1. Paul uses the word 'urge' in Romans 12:1 It is a word filled with both emotion and purpose. The word is imploring you to get moving to action. What is it that Paul wants the believers in the church of Rome to do?
2. Read verse 3. What does this verse tell us about the church in Rome?

3. In Romans 12:1-11, we have learned about Paul's doctrinal truths, "the mercies of God." It is through God's mercies that we are able to walk the Christian life. How is God's mercy encouraging to the church in Rome?
4. In Romans 5:8, it is written "God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." Love used in Romans 12:9 is agape. Agape is the selfless love and goodwill towards others, this is something one must choose. In verses 9-12, what is said about love and obedience to God's will?
5. In v. 14, who are the people in "low position?" Why is Paul specifically mentioning these people?

LIFE APPLICATION

1. Our eyes are open to the wonders and mercies of God, and with this we don't want to be shaped by the world around us. What are some of the ways that the world molds and bends us? What are some of the ways that we can let God in to shape and mold our minds and hearts?
2. Read v.6, List what your gifts are.

3. Peter writes about this in 1 Peter 4:10 “As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace.” We have nothing which God has not given us (James 1:17) and we should see whatever gifts we've been given as opportunities to serve others. How do we use our gifts to serve others?
4. How does v.10 help you love more sincerely?
5. Give some examples of doing good to those who have hurt you. How is doing good to those who have hurt you an example of being a living sacrifice?
6. Personal Challenge. Look back at your answers. Now think of a painful and difficult relationship you are in. What can you do to live peacefully with this person and overcome evil with good? Pick one thing that you will do this week to show this person “the good and honorable things of God.”

Lesson 3: Sunday, March 24, 2019

Death's Valley Psalm 23:4 Study Passage: Phil. 3:14-21

¹⁴ I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

¹⁵ All of us, then, who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you. ¹⁶ Only let us live up to what we have already attained.

¹⁷ Join together in following my example, brothers and sisters, and just as you have us as a model, keep your eyes on those who live as we do. ¹⁸ For, as I have often told you before and now tell you again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. ¹⁹ Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is set on earthly things. ²⁰ But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹ who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.

SCRIPTURE SUMMARY

Philippians is by Paul to the believers in the Roman colony of Philippi (Greece). Paul writes to the Philippians to encourage them to live joyfully in all circumstances. In chapter 3 Paul reminds the Philippians of two crucial elements 1. Do not put your confidence in what you do but what Jesus has done for you; and 2. Jesus won the race for us and Jesus desires for us to run towards him learning more about Jesus' love for us.

Stephanie Deach-Foyle Testimony

Growing up I was blessed to attend private Christian schools and being raised here at First Pres, my whole growing up revolved around being a Christian. I followed the “rule book” better than most of my friends and classmates; I always tried to take the moral high ground. It made me feel superior, but in reality, I was just being judgmental and following God for the wrong reasons. I had a love for God but would not show the same affection to others around me.

My judgmental ways led me away from the path of Christ. I wanted the glory in being a devout Christian; I wanted praise for following the rules. I wanted to be put up higher than everyone else. My motives were clearly selfish even if I did not see this at first. To me I was just being an average Christian. When talking with friends and peers I would often be ready to judge their words and actions instead of truly listening with an open heart. 1 John 4:20 says, “Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen”. Although I was not always responding with hate, I wasn’t responding with God’s tenderness. When denying compassion to others I was not exhibiting God’s love, I was not reciprocating God’s unconditional love that He shows to us.

One random Sunday as I was sitting in the pews, the pastor had started the service with a prayer of “opening your heart to the Holy Spirit so that the message will penetrate you” which I usually turn a blind eye to, but this week it had put me in a state of mindfulness and being open to what God had to say. Later in the sermon the pastor mentioned God’s love for us. He then asked how do you show that love with others around you; how are you a light or an example for the world? Although I was never really unkind, I was not being a light for others. To follow Jesus is to love others. He leads so clearly by example, yet this might have been the biggest step of following Christ I had missed. Letting the Holy Spirit open up my heart for change was crucial in my path with God. You may not have issues with being judgmental, but you must be mature in accepting your need change and to work towards your goal to be Christ-like.

LIFE APPLICATION

- 1) When you have turbulent times in your life, how can you press toward the goal? What are some of your shortcomings?

- 2) Who are the enemies of the cross in our world today? What can you do to reflect your citizenship so you are the example to these enemies?

- 3) Can you identify in yourself any qualities of one who lives as an enemy of the cross of Christ? (Mindset, values, priorities etc.)

- 4) Think of a Christian model in your life. What are some of the attributes you need to emulate?

- 5) How can verses 20-21 be of hope to you today if you are in low spirits?

Lesson 4: Sunday, March 31, 2019

The Feast Awaits Psalm 23:5 Study Passage: Isaiah 25: 6-9

⁶ On this mountain the LORD Almighty will prepare
a feast of rich food for all peoples,
a banquet of aged wine—
the best of meats and the finest of wines.

⁷ On this mountain he will destroy
the shroud that enfolds all peoples,
the sheet that covers all nations;

⁸ he will swallow up death forever.

The Sovereign LORD will wipe away the tears
from all faces;
he will remove his people's disgrace
from all the earth.

The LORD has spoken.

⁹ In that day they will say,

“Surely this is our God;
we trusted in him, and he saved us.

This is the LORD, we trusted in him;
let us rejoice and be glad in his salvation.”

SCRIPTURE SUMMARY

The prophet Isaiah has summarized the time of judgement for those against God. As a follow up, Chapter 25 is all about the joy and thanksgiving of this judgement and the establishment of peace. Matthew Henry's Commentary notes, “The kind reception of repentant sinners is often in the New Testament likened to a feast.” Consider this as you begin to study Isaiah 25:6-9.

ICE BREAKERS

- 1) Do 'feasts' or family dinners play a big role in your family? How so?
- 2) What is a time that you had to 'trust in the Lord'?

SCRIPTURE INTEPRETATION

- 1) In Verse 7 the verse references a 'shroud that enfolds all peoples, the sheet that covers all nations;' what do you think this 'shroud' or 'sheet' might be?
- 2) Shrouds and Sheets were garments worn during times of mourning –what might there be to mourn?
- 3) This scripture section talks about a great time in which liberation will come – what do you think this liberation is from?
- 4) How is God being described in this passage? What picture of God does this passage paint?
- 5) In today's culture we live in the already, but not yet time. Christ has already come but we also await his return to fulfill the rest. What parts of this scripture have already been fulfilled? What are we awaiting to be fulfilled?

LIFE APPLICATION

- 1) In Verse 9 it states “Surely this is our God; we trusted in him and he saved us. This is the Lord, we trusted in him; let us rejoice and be glad in his salvation.” Has there been a time in your life where you trusted God? If so, did you rejoice & praise him for His faithfulness to you?

- 2) What shroud or sheet is cast over you – what are you mourning? What do you need liberation from?

- 4) How can we rejoice in the salvation/liberation that is spoken of in this text?

- 5) In this season of lent who have you been waiting for – is it the Lord this passage talks about?

- 6) How might God be calling you to respond to this text?

Lesson 5: Sunday, April 7, 2019

Time to Look Over Your Shoulder Psalm 23:6 Study Passage: Psalm 103:17-22

- ¹⁷ But from everlasting to everlasting
the LORD's love is with those who fear him,
and his righteousness with their children's children—
¹⁸ with those who keep his covenant
and remember to obey his precepts.
¹⁹ The LORD has established his throne in heaven,
and his kingdom rules over all.
²⁰ Praise the LORD, you his angels,
you mighty ones who do his bidding,
who obey his word.
²¹ Praise the LORD, all his heavenly hosts,
you his servants who do his will.
²² Praise the LORD, all his works
everywhere in his dominion.

SCRIPTURE SUMMARY

Many study bibles will note that Psalm 103 is a "Thanksgiving for God's Mercy." It surely is a Psalm of praise to God for all he does for his people. In part because of His mercy toward us, he never leaves us. Praise God!

Blane Goldwater Testimony

Recently I was diagnosed with a life ending situation. This condition came out of left field, completely unexpected. It's been a scary and uncertain time for me. It also caused me to review my personal conversation and relationship with God. One of the things I realized is: God is in control! No matter how much I want to control the situation and I want to make myself healthy and right, I simply don't have the power. I am encouraged that God is open to whatever I want to say, ask, or pray to Him for. I know that when I go to Him in prayer, He hears me and He is merciful to my petitions. I take comfort in knowing that He is everlasting in my life. For all that I have lived through and will live through He will be by my side never forsaking me.

We all experience a plethora of life's sorrows and joys. Yet we can thank Him, ask Him for healing, resolve our conflicts, or tell Him we're angry. God hears our prayers. He is omnipresent, omnipotent supreme. That is such a revelation to come to realize and embrace.

I know that even though not all my prayers are answered affirmatively, I know God is with me. We all have a living and loving God who reigns over His entire creation. Who is merciful to us when we often do not deserve His mercy. As I move through trials, being thankful for His Holy presence, I, like all of us believers, become citizens who reflect Jesus' love.

So, no matter the outcome of my current diagnoses, I know that because my God is everlasting and He loves me, in the end, I am just changing my address from Northridge to heaven, where God has established his throne!

LIFE APPLICATION

- 1) What kind of god do you follow? Explain.

- 2) When it isn't the Lord of Lords, what do you do to get back on track? How can one focus on following God?

- 3) Read Deut. 31:6 and 8 and Psalm 25:6 what do these scriptures say to you about God being everlasting?

- 4) God is merciful when we do not deserve it. How does this statement encourage you when you do not follow God?

Lesson 6: Sunday, April 14, 2019

Our Final Destination Psalm 23:6

Study Passage: Rev 21:2-7

²I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. ³And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. ⁴‘He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death’ or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”

⁵He who was seated on the throne said, “I am making everything new! ”Then he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.”

⁶He said to me: “It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To the thirsty I will give water without cost from the spring of the water of life. ⁷Those who are victorious will inherit all this, and I will be their God and they will be my children.

SCRIPTURE SUMMARY

Revelation 20 has described the time when Satan will be defeated and flung into the bottomless pit. Chapter 21 allows us to envision a world without Satan.

ICE BREAKERS

- 1) On a scale of 1 to 10, how excited are you about going to heaven?

- 2) Do you laugh at cartoon versions of heaven — guys in nightgowns sitting on clouds and playing harps, for example — or do you cringe, either because as a Christian you know better or secretly would rather jam with the percussion section yourself?

SCRIPTURE INTEPRETATION

- 1) John was told to write down what might have puzzled him also: How can a city turn into a bride? One is a place, the other a person. How does it describe heaven?

- 3) Once we get this idea of heaven as the ultimate "Gated Community," do we puzzle next over the gorgeously adorned bride? In John's vision, what does it mean for the bride to be beautiful?

- 4) What does v. 3 say about "the people" versus "all people?"

- 5) Revelation is full of imagery. With this in mind, what does it mean to “give water without cost?”

LIFE APPLICATION

- 1) Read Eph. 5:25-30. Would Jesus be thrilled if we cherished Him more and nourished His hunger for love?
- 2) The average American tax payer cannot afford to seclude himself in a ritzy gated community. How can we communicate this picture of heaven to the lost & hopeless?
- 3) We all have favorite household products and probably hate it when store shelves are suddenly restocked with the "new and improved" version. Read Isiah 43:18-21. How can we embrace the “new and improved” version of heaven?
- 4) A little boy was asked, so the story goes, how one gets to heaven. He replied, "You have to die first." Is there something we have to let die first before the prospect of heaven becomes as glorious as it deserves?

- 5) Revelation echoes and complements Genesis perfectly. Do we see "Paradise" as the ultimate place of intimate fellowship with our Creator-Redeemer God?

- 6) John's ability to write down all he saw and heard whilst being imprisoned could not have been an easy task. To what extent do we allow difficult circumstances to crowd out the sure promise of Jesus?

- 7) Does John's vision of the new Jerusalem, help us envision a more grand heaven?