

St. David's Presbyterian Church  
St. John's, NL  
"Security"  
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(Lent 4)

Safety and security concerns begin even before life outside your mother begins. We are told that the fetus can tell if the mother is in danger or stressed or happy and safe. And so from sometime after human faculties even begin to process life experience, security and safety concerns become prominent. A baby knows the safety of its mother, has vision appropriate to being held in one's arms, and a baby knows if they are separated from mom, not knowing the reasons, but knowing the separation. So if you had medical needs, as an infant, that required separation from your mother and your family, then that separation often will give you a predilection to anxiety and a sense of insecurity. However, if you have a reasonably normal birth and a caring mother, you probably will have more of a sense of security and belonging. Mom brings that sense of being and belonging to the infant.

And from there on, we shouldn't be surprised if some individuals are more concerned about their safety and security than others. Some of us carry a great deal of wounding and we need healing from that. Others of us have a reasonable balance of security and risk taking that allows acknowledging both our own levels of function and dysfunction as well as others' levels of function or dysfunction.

Some of us, for example, will take a great deal of comfort and security from a song like "The Lord's My Shepherd" in the hymnal which we will sing in a little while. Others might prefer the News Boys version, "It is You." [play CD] Which of these brings more of what you receive from music? Music is a powerful medium. The screaming young women from the early 60s who are mostly in their early 60s now might not be able to tell you why the music was so powerful, nor someone going to a Blue Rodeo concert or a rock concert today, tell why the music is so powerful. But we know God has given us music as a powerful way to worship. And God is allowing many styles of music to be used in worship today. Music engages us as whole human beings, and so God wants us to know Him in the music.

Whether it be the Lord's My Shepherd, or some other song of worship and praise, the music involves us as we meditate on the theme. "Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me..." To the former captain

of the slavery ship who lived in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, John Newton, these words were healing to the soul of the one who knew how dark his life had been as he earned his living by transporting slaves, seeing them die, seeing their pain. He was deeply distraught with his sin, with his rebellion against God, and God met him as he acknowledged his sin and eventually not only left the slave trade, but also helped to abolish it in his later life capacity as an Anglican priest.

So not only do we have the words and the music of the great hymn, but also the life of the one who wrote, to inform our thoughts and reflections. The Scriptures constantly tell us of the need to trust the One who can overcome our darkness, sin and rebellion. The Scriptures encourage us to anchor our security in the One who is faithful to keep our trust, no matter how changeable or difficult the times are in which we live. Samuel faced those terrible times. He went through the transition from judges and prophets leading Israel to the people crying out for a king “like all the other nations have.” He anointed Saul king at the command of the Lord. But Saul turned out to be as rebellious and sinful a leader who turned against God and God’s ways. So now God was choosing another leader in Saul’s place. And He was asking Samuel the prophet to anoint David as king, although God had only told Samuel which family he was to go to. Since there were seven sons in that family, God had taught him not to look at simply how handsome or physically strong or confident the man looked like, there was something else at play. God was teaching Samuel many decades after he had first heard God’s voice as a boy, to keep listening for the one to anoint, and for God’s choice. In this choosing, God’s grace went ahead of Samuel and David, who was just a young shepherd at the time, not a profession that would normally lead to the royal line, but nevertheless what God had chosen. He was a young musician, who knew how to worship, who enjoyed playing his instruments, who cared a great deal about the sheep in creative and courageous ways. He ministered to his sheep and his king, even after he knew he was to be king, he had the patience to wait for God’s timing. All this is to say that we too need to be listening to God, as we face life’s decisions, not just talking to God. We need to be trusting God with our lives, with our relationships, with our jobs and families, with our health, with our recreation.

So as David the shepherd, praised the Good Shepherd, he sang confidently of God guarding him even as others died, even as wild animals sought to take his life and the life of his sheep, he would defend, encourage and feed

the little ones and the older ones and look after all of them. So we too need to relate to the One David knew, and sing our songs of praise to God.

I hope you have a good repertoire in your heart of praise and worship songs that you can sing to God. Sometimes all we have is what's on the radio, mostly not songs of praise and thanksgiving. It doesn't matter if it's hymns, or rock, or hip hop, or techno or screamo, what matters is devoting yourself to God and singing that devotion out to God. There is a security that comes when you sing your songs to the Lord that may not come otherwise.

It's no wonder we sing songs like The Lord's My Shepherd and Amazing Grace for funerals, because we need the promises of these familiar songs when we are in the valley of the shadow of death. We need to remember that grace will see us home.

The grace that comes upon us is like the grace that came upon the man that had been blind from birth. The discussion started out as a simply question from the disciples: "Was this guy born blind because of his parents' sin or his own?" And Jesus' answer surprises the disciples and probably should surprise us too. He says "neither, but rather to show God's works." And so today, why are you and I so sinful, or not so sinful in our own eyes? It is once again for you simply to experience the grace of God. It is for you to acknowledge the sin and darkness in your life, as you are able, and go away from that to God. Say, "I need you, Lord, come into my life, forgive my sin and I will follow you and your ways." Jesus said to the blind man to go and wash in the pool, to us he says this. And the grace of God comes even to this older man who couldn't even see who was telling the way to be healed. He didn't even know who he was and he couldn't see Jesus, yet Jesus healed him and set him on the right path. Even through all the cross examination of the Pharisees, who didn't believe he had blind, who didn't believe that Jesus could do this, who didn't believe even though they had heard the testimony of the man and his parents.

Here's today's whole message in one phrase: Security comes in believing. It takes risk. It means change. But ultimately it means the richest life one could ever live. It means pouring out your life for others and for the community, but only as the life of the Creator God flows into you, so you have the resource to do what you are called to do. We need grace to hear Jesus say, "He is the light of the World." We need grace to hear that we are blind outside of our relationship to Him, and receive sight, spiritual sight,

even as we receive physical birth and sight, by grace. That's why we can sing "I once lost but now am found, was blind but now I see." It's not about our wonderful vision, but about the One who can give us the light and the sight to see in the first place.

The grace that comes to us is upon us now. Take a moment of quietness and listen to Jesus' words: (maybe just close your eyes to listen)

9:38 The formerly blind man said, "Lord, I believe." And he worshiped him.

9:39 Jesus said, "I came into this world for judgment so that those who do not see may see, and those who do see may become blind."

9:40 Some of the Pharisees near him heard this and said to him, "Surely we are not blind, are we?"

9:41 Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would not have sin. But now that you say, 'We see,' your sin remains.

Let us pray.

"Help us, Lord, that as we acknowledge our need, and sin and rebellion, we begin to have new vision from you, but as we claim to not need God and claim to not need one another, then sin remains. Help us, Lord to acknowledge our need and give ourselves to You anew this day, in Christ's name we pray, Amen."