

Facing Lions, Bears and Giants

Psalm 23

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How many of you like cats?

Want to know a secret? When I was very little, I was terrified of cats. When they came close, I started to cry.

Maybe that's why today I sort of figure that the best use for a cat is as a furry speed bump!

How about a cat like this?

How would you feel about seeing one of these in your front yard?



Or - let's say that you went with some friends to the beach. You went for a picnic. And then, suddenly, putting his paw into your picnic basket, right beside you, was one of these.



Could you imagine if you got a job where you had to chase away animals like this? What if animals like this lived in the forest near your house, and your job was to keep them out of the backyard - how would you feel about that?

I think that maybe I would want a different job.

I don't think I would want to be in the same yard as a lion or a bear!

I mean - They're bigger than me - and make me feel very small.

They all scare me.

They can all hurt me, or kill me... or you!

At Friendship Club this year you learned about someone who wasn't very big. He wasn't very old. He had a whole bunch of older brothers who thought they were stronger and smarter and better than he was.

And this poor guy ended up facing lions and bears.

His brothers left him to do the jobs on the farm that nobody else wanted to do.

He got to clean the animals.

And take care of them.

He had to go out to the barn, and into the field - all by himself.

They went and did the interesting and fun work without him.

His name was -

- David.

David went into the field and took care of the sheep.

Problem was - there weren't only sheep in the fields.

There were lions.

And there were bears.

And they happened to think that sheep made a nice snack.

David had to chase them away without becoming a bear-snack himself.

And - guess what!

He did it.

He was able to not only chase them away, but even kill them.

Why?

Because David knew a secret.

He knew that he wasn't alone in the field with the sheep and the lions and the bears. There was someone there who was much bigger and much stronger than he was.

That was God.

God was busy protecting David
while David was busy protecting the sheep.

And that's why David wrote the poem we call Psalm 23.
Remember how it begins?

"The Lord is my shepherd."

Little David. Protected by great big God.
Who gives him a place to rest.
Who provides food.
Who goes with him along the paths in the field.
Who makes him strong when the bears attack.

Wherever David went, God went along.
God was always there -
- as if everywhere David went he was walking inside God's house.



And that's what David told the king just before he headed out into another field where this guy was waiting for him, wanting to turn David into bird food. It's the giant, Goliath.

David said, "God helped me defeat the lion and the bear. And he'll help me defeat you." Which he did.

Because God, bigger than the bear or lion, was bigger than Goliath, too.
That same God wants to walk with us in our lives, too.
With you.

Many of you have what some people call "disabilities."
Sometimes they can make you feel like that maybe you're not as fast or strong or big or smart as some other people.
And that could make you feel sad or bad or angry.

Yes, disabilities can be like a lion, or a bear, or a giant in our life.
Then the question is - so, do we let them growl so loud that they make us scared? Do we spend so much time looking at them that we forget about the God who is bigger than lions and bears and giants and whatever other problems we face?

I want to tell you about two people I know.

The first one is Arnie. Arnie was blind. And all that Arnie could think about was being blind. He was blind. Other people were not.

All Arnie could think about was the things he couldn't do because he couldn't see.

All Arnie did was sit in his room and feel sorry for himself and demand that his mother do everything for him.

Arnie was often angry.

Arnie was never happy.

The disability growled so loud that it controlled Arnie.

The other person is Jenny.

Jenny also had some things about her that other people called problems. She had a disability, too. But if you'd ask her about it, all Jenny would say was, "I am me. And God don't make junk!"

Jenny was ready to help other people.

Jenny loved to give other people hugs.

Jenny smiled a lot.
When Jenny came into a room, the room became a happier place.
Jenny loved Jesus, and knew that Jesus loved her.
And Jenny knew that Jesus was always taking care of her.
Jenny knew that Jesus would go with her everywhere.

God has used Jenny to do wonderful things for people - things that other people who look bigger and stronger and smarter couldn't do!

God did very special things through Jenny.
Because Jenny trusted God to take care of her.

Do you?

Trust God to take care of you?

Do you believe that the God who helped David and Jenny can take care of you, and help you do special things for Him, too?

Perhaps your issue isn't disability.

Perhaps the bear that growls in your life right now is a financial bear market.

These last weeks have been very troubling.

Many people have lost - at least on paper - a tremendous amount of money. For at least one person with whom I spoke, the real effect is that retirement has had to be postponed. She'd hoped to stop working at her physically demanding job because of increasing pain and disability. Now it looks like she'll have to keep going for a couple of extra years, anyway.

That's real hardship.

For some people it goes beyond hardship to panic. Laying awake at night. Real worry and feeling terribly vulnerable.

Then the question is - How much were we depending on the bottom line of our monthly financial statement, anyway?

Where is our trust in life, anyway?

Psalm 20:7 implicitly asks - "In what do you place your trust?"

And it answers something to the effect of, "Some people trust in the strength of armies or powerful machinery, but we trust in the Lord our God."

Do we trust the things we've built, the education we've accomplished, the job title we carry around, the healthy body we've sculpted, or our daily medications?

Are these the things that put a smile on our face and let us sleep through the night?

It's easy to say, "I trust in the Lord" when things are going well.

But what about in the times when they AREN'T going well? That's a better time to ask the question.

That's certainly the case financially these days. Stock markets routinely go up or down 3-5% in one day. The dollar gains and loses not just fractions, but whole cents in one day.

Like a crazed ride on an out of control elevator up and down the CN tower - up, down, up, down, up, down.

One thing's for sure - you can't count on it.

So..... then..... what

or who - is left?

David had times when his life was out of control.

WAY beyond anything he could manage or contain.

When he faced a lion or bear.

When he stood in the field,

Goliath on one side and him on the other.

When he was running for his life, and his son Absalom was on the throne in the palace, threatening to kill him.

But there was one thing he remembered.
And that one thing I hope you will ALWAYS remember.
Can you promise me that?
To remember what I'm about to tell you?

***Just because the present situation is difficult,
That doesn't mean that God has left you alone!
He's still with you.
He's still in charge.
He still keeps the last word for Himself.***

Can you remember that?

Say this with me -

***"My God
is always
with me."***

Psalm 23:4 - "Even when I walk through the darkest valley..."

***"My God
is always
with me."***

Even when I feel very small

***"My God
is always
with me."***

Even when I get sick

***"My God
is always
with me."***

Even when I fall down

***"My God
is always
with me."***

When I am young, or when I grow old

***"My God
is always
with me."***

If I'm disabled, or healthy

***"My God
is always
with me."***

When I'm at church, and when I'm at home

***"My God
is always***

with me.

Psalm 23:6:

Surely, goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life....

Why?

Because.....

***“My God
is always
with me.”***

The God who is bigger than lions, bears and giants

is

always

with

me.