

Sermon on the Mount

July 20, 2014

## **Title: Travel Guide**

Text: Psalm 23

Summary:

### **Travel Mode**

#### **The Travel Mindset:**

It's amazing how much you can get done on the internet when it comes to planning a trip. You can buy a ticket, reserve a rental car, reserve lodging, investigate the place or places you intend to visit, even take a virtual walk through Google Earth. And you don't even have to leave your house.

We can take a thousand virtual journeys without ever leaving the comfort of our family room. Pick a continent, pick a country. What do you want to see? National parks? Disney World? The beach? Some place overseas? No problem: just google your favorite destination and inside of 2 seconds, you're there, virtually, that is. You can full-size an HD webcam and enjoy the view.

But actually being on that webcam is something else again. It means stopping the mail, packing your suitcase and carry-on. It means not just buying a ticket on line, but getting up early, driving to the airport, going through security and boarding a plane. It means finding that hotel that came up when you googled for rooms. It means abandoning your routine for a new adventure. It means being willing to go into "Travel Mode."

#### **Guide Book:**

One of the best ways to get into Travel Mode is to touch bases with someone who has already been to the place you are going. A good guide book will point you in the right direction -- even before you leave the house. It will tell you what to see and what to avoid. It will tell you where to eat and what kind of food to expect. It will suggest good places to sleep, things to do, sites to see. In fact, you'll probably want to carry it around with you for your entire trip.

The story of God and His People is all about being in Travel Mode. Noah signs on for a family cruise, along with a menagerie of creatures. Abraham leaves the Big City to become a nomad in Canaan. Moses takes his people on a journey through the Sinai Desert to the Promised Land. That journey, The Exodus, is the model for our own journey through life as we follow Jesus.

And God's Word is our guidebook, always pointing us in the right direction for the next twist and turn in the path ahead.

### **David's Psalm:**

King David was no stranger to being on the road -- or to wandering far off the beaten track, for that matter. His most famous song, Psalm 23, superbly captures what it means to be in Travel Mode. Listen to the ways he reminds us that we are on Exodus, ourselves:

### **Psalm 23:1-4 NIV**

**The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing.**

**He makes me lie down in green pastures,  
he *leads* me beside quiet waters,  
he refreshes my soul.**

**He *guides* me along the right paths  
for his name's sake.**

**Even though I *walk*  
through the darkest valley,  
I will fear no evil,  
for you are with me;  
your rod and your staff,  
they comfort me.**

This is not a Psalm about sitting around, with all the creature-comforts of home. This not a song about God taking care of our needs while we stick to our old routine. No, this is a song about being "on the road." It's a song about being away from home, about facing the unknowns and the uncertainty that always comes when you are in Travel Mode.

This morning is a morning that reminds us that God is always calling us to move forward with Him. Pastors Gus and Karrie have heard His call and have stepped out in faith to obey Him. But the same has happened for a lot of us: Jennie and her family moving to Texas. Young people going off to college. A bread-winner looking for a new job. A couple bringing a new baby home from the hospital. Travel Mode.

So what can God's Travel Guide say to us as we face the uncertainty, the sadness as well as the excitement, the neediness and the hopefulness of being on Exodus?

### **All You Need**

**Something to eat!**

So what do you need a good travel guide to tell you. Well, two of your most basic needs are food and shelter! No wonder guide books are filled with listings of restaurants and hotels, complete with ratings and price ranges.

David's song begins by addressing these two needs:

**Psalm 23:1-3a**

**The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing.**

**He makes me lie down in green pastures,  
he leads me beside quiet waters,  
he refreshes my soul.**

The first thing David tells us is that on God's Exodus Journey we will never go without. And then he goes on to tell us that God will provide us with food and drink, as well as a place to sleep.

Think about where you are right now on your Exodus Journey. More than anything else, you need food and shelter for the journey. You need to know that God will take care you each and every day.

The same is true for our Children and Family Ministry and our Youth Ministry. Our kids need God's provision, and we can trust Him to provide.

**Directions:**

One of the scariest things about taking a trip to a place you've never been to before is the thought of getting lost. And that fear grows exponentially if you don't even know the language! No wonder guide books are filled with all sorts of maps and detailed directions on how to get to the next attraction!

In the Book of Isaiah we encounter God's People asking for Him to help them find their way. They had become lost in the wilderness of idolatry and exile. But now they remember how God had formed them as a nation and led them out of slavery. Their prayer: Would He do it again?

**Isaiah 63:11-14 NIV**

**Then his people recalled the days of old,  
the days of Moses and his people—  
where is he who brought them through the sea,  
with the shepherd of his flock?**

**Where is he who set  
his Holy Spirit among them,**

**who sent his glorious arm of power  
to be at Moses' right hand,  
who divided the waters before them,  
to gain for himself everlasting renown,  
who led them through the depths?**

**Like a horse in open country,  
they did not stumble;  
like cattle that go down to the plain,  
they were given rest by the Spirit of the Lord.**

**This is how you guided your people  
to make for yourself a glorious name.**

Isn't that what we all long for, especially when we seem to have lost our way? Will God be there for us this time? Will He part the sea for us? Will He turn our obstacles into clear pathways? Will He place His Holy Spirit among us to be our Guide?

David assures us that on God's Exodus Journey He will always be our Guide:

**Psalm 23:3b NIV**

**He *guides* me along the right paths  
for his name's sake.**

**Safe Travel:**

A place to eat and a place to sleep. Good directions. All well and good. But will I be safe when I travel? I remember visiting Miami to assist with a teen missions trip. My job was to shuttle luggage from the Miami airport to a hotel. At that time there had been a rash of violent car-jackings in certain parts of the city. Tourists had inadvertently driven into bad neighborhoods and had gotten into trouble. As a result, the city put up happy sunshine signs all along the freeway from the airport to downtown Miami. The message: stay on *this* road and you'll be safe!

David tells us that on our Exodus Journey God Himself assures our safe passage:

**Psalms 23:4-5 NIV**

**Even though I walk  
through the darkest valley,  
I will fear no evil,  
for you are with me;  
your rod and your staff,  
they comfort me.**

**You prepare a table before me  
in the presence of my enemies.**

**You anoint my head with oil;  
my cup overflows.**

We don't travel alone. He is right there beside us to comfort and protect. He prepares a feast in the middle of uncertainty and strife. He pours out healing and blessing.

Whatever your Exodus Journey, not only will God meet your needs and show you the path; He will be your Bodyguard!

## **Travel Guide**

### **Destination assured:**

Of course, the most important thing about any journey is that you actually get to where you were heading. It's fine to say that "the journey is as important as the destination," but no one wants to ride around in a car for their whole vacation and never get to the place they were going to.

In our Exodus Journey there will be moments when we do wonder whether we will actually get to the destination we sensed that God had put before us. There are times when the obstacles will seem too great, the road too long, the dream too good to be true. When that happens, remember what David said about the true, God-led Exodus Journey:

### **Psalms 23:6 NIV**

**Surely your goodness and love will follow me  
all the days of my life,  
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord  
forever.**

When God is leading us, our destination is assured.

### **Travel Guide:**

David began his song by identifying his Travel Guide: "The Lord is my shepherd!" Jesus told His followers that He Himself was and is the Good Shepherd -- God's Travel Guide for you and me on our Exodus Journey. The journey begins and ends with Him.

Every day you will wonder whether or not you will have enough strength and provisions for the journey. Sometimes you will feel the cold clutch of fear and not want to go on. Sometimes you will feel tired and discouraged. Sometimes you will feel all alone. That's why we need the Good Shepherd to lead us and keep us energized for the journey.

He is our Travel Guide.

So, whatever it is that you need right now to take the next step in that journey, Jesus, the Good Shepherd, is ready to provide. He's already been around that next turn in the road; He knows the way. He *is* the Way.

So, gather your stuff; it's time to get going!