



"You Anoint My Head with Oil" - Chapter 10 A
Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23 (Faber McMullen- Facilitator)

It is helpful to remember that the poet is laying down the events that are involved in sheep keeping. Now, we're imagining them with fresh and tender forage, sitting beside still waters. It is now summertime, and with the summer comes the flies. Summertime and especially droughts are the time here in Texas where the pests are most prolific and plentiful. I will never forget the heartache I experienced once when I had a prize Beefmaster Bull. He wouldn't let me handle him, and so I could never trap him to worm him. A drought came, and each day I watched him in panic as I saw him wasting away. He wouldn't listen to the master's voice, and one day I found him down on the ground, wasted away, eaten by worms and dead. The poet king David knew the great dangers to the flock when they remained un-anointed with oil.

Oil carried the medicinal remedies to rid the flock of parasites. Without it, they would waste away and end up dead. The hoards of insects that come with summer weather are killers. Sheep (and other livestock) are susceptible to bot flies, warble flies, black flies, mosquitoes, heel flies, nose flies, deer flies, gnats and many others. This can become a time of torture for livestock. The nose flies are the worst for the sheep. They will lay eggs on the sheep's nose and worms hatch and move their way up the sheep's head. The sheep will thrash, beating their heads on anything to get relief. Advance stages of these flies lead to blindness. Only the strictest attention of the shepherd can stop the damage before it is hopelessly permanent.

Linseed oil, sulphur, and tar were used on the sheep's head. Once applied, there was immediate relief. The frenzy was gone. The sheep would start to feed quietly again. This is the exact picture of irritations in our lives. We always end up with those "flies in the ointment" of our most lofty spiritual experiences. The irritations come. It is the small petty annoyances that seem to drive us to the brink (and sometimes over it!). We sometimes feel so tormented that we feel like we can't go on. Just like the sheep, we are in desperate need of relief. We need renewed application of the oil to counteract the aggravations of personality conflicts, etc. The Christian life is that way. Some think that one anointing of God's Holy Spirit is enough. But, we need to be anointed afresh. Let me be clear. You receive the Holy Spirit one time at the moment of your salvation, but you are filled (anointed) with the Holy Spirit afresh as you submit to the sovereignty of God and His will for your life. In Luke 11:13, Jesus our Shepherd tells us, *"¹³ If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"*

It is logical for us to ask the Holy Spirit to anoint us afresh so that we can respond in quietness to the aggravations of circumstances and people in our daily lives. The "stuff of life"

will overcome us if we don't seek the anointing to give us His supernatural power to handle come what may. This helps us to be content and serene and not fall to the pests that life brings. Just expose the irritant to Him and say, "Lord, I cannot cope with these petty annoying irritations without a measure of your grace. Lord, give me peace lest I be consumed. Please apply the oil of your Spirit to my mind." He will do so. He will do it immediately.

Summer is also "scab time". It is caused by a minute parasite. It is passed from infected to non infected animals. When two sheep rub heads together, scab is passed. Dips are built to completely submerge animals to kill the scab. The head has to be plunged several times to rid the flock of scab. The dipping tubs are expensive and the sheep have to be dipped one by one. David knew the antidote to scab. In Palestine the only remedy was olive oil mixed with certain spices and sulphur. They had to be dipped one by one. This is what David was talking about when he said, "You anoint my head with oil. My cup runneth over." In the Christian life, most infection comes through our minds. We get our heads together with someone who doesn't have the mind of Christ and we become "infected" so to speak. It is amazing how a good mind will become "infected" so quickly by a bad mind. It doesn't seem to work the other way very often.

Young people particularly find themselves infected and influenced by people whose mind and character is not Christ-Like. The media, social media, and other major dispensers of information have minds that are of the world and are hostile and contrary to the mind of God. *"For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please."* (Galatians 5:17) One can't be exposed to such contacts without somehow becoming contaminated. In this present age, there is more and more disrespect for what is noble. We are told, *"⁸ Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. ⁹ Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you."* (Philippians 4:8-9) Let Him apply the Holy Spirit to your conscience and subconscious mind, to cleanse it and anoint it to think as it should.

The difficulty is that some of us are stubborn. We kick and protest when the master puts his hand on us to apply the oil. We are a stiff-necked lot, and without him we'd be beyond help. Where would most of us be? As summer moves into autumn, subtle changes come. The insects are less of an issue. The earth prepares for winter. This is the season of rut, when rams compete for the ewes. The crash of heads and colliding bodies can be heard into the night. The shepherd will catch rams and smear their heads with grease so that when they battle, the lubricant will make them glance off of each other. Among God's people, there is also head-butting that goes on. Some become hurt. Many people will never enter a church again because of some hurt that they've experienced. This is often the result of some kind of unnecessary competition.

Our shepherd loves to apply the precious ointment or His Holy Spirit to our lives. When the disciples were competing with one another, Jesus told them their comforter was coming. God's people are often uncharitable with other believers. But, when the Holy Spirit takes over,

the fruits of the Spirit remove the petty jealousies. As the children of God and as His sheep, we should be known as the most contented people in the world. Our cups often overflow, but most of the time, we don't even realize it. We are to be thankful, grateful, and appreciative. The Christian life that overcomes is the Holy Spirit which helps us to go through anything and everything that might come our way. He anoints my head with oil, my cup runneth over.

Matthew 26:6-13

While Jesus was in Bethany in the home of Simon the Leper, a woman came to him with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, which she poured on his head as he was reclining at the table. When the disciples saw this, they were indignant. "Why this waste?" they asked. "This perfume could have been sold at a high price and the money given to the poor." Aware of this, Jesus said to them, "Why are you bothering this woman? She has done a beautiful thing to me. The poor you will always have with you,^[6] but you will not always have me. When she poured this perfume on my body, she did it to prepare me for burial. Truly I tell you, wherever this gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her."

Mark 14:3-9

Luke 7:36-50

John 12:1-8

When I read this line it reminds me of these verses where Jesus was the one being anointed with oil. It is not just because we are his sheep. It is to show His love and caring for his flock. The shepherd LOVES his flock that is why he will anoint with the healing oil.

James 5:14-16

Is anyone among you sick? Then he must call for the elders of the church and they are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him. Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed, the effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much