The Promise of Anointing
Welcome to Harvest Community Church
Series: Psalm 23
Text: Psalm 23:1-5

In the Bible there are several reasons given for anointing. Kings, prophets and priests were anointed to their offices and duties. In the New Testament we often refer to the anointing as an equipping with the power of the Holy Spirit to fulfil the call that God has placed on our lives. The 23rd Psalm is referring to a shepherd and the sheep.

Shepherds did not pour oil on sheep for ceremony or appearance. They did it because sheep were vulnerable, they could not protect themselves from what they could not see coming. Oil was an act of care. It was protective and it was intentional.

In biblical times, shepherds would mix olive oil with herbs and gently rub it over a sheep's head, nose, and ears by liberally pouring over them until they were saturated. This oil healed wounds from rocky terrain and soothed skin irritated by heat and dryness. Most importantly, it protected sheep from insects and parasites. Flies would try to lay eggs in a sheep's nose or ears, leading to torment and infection. The oil created a barrier. What once brought irritation could no longer take hold.

The sheep did not apply the oil themselves. They did not earn it by behaving well. They did not ask for it with perfect obedience. The shepherd noticed the need and responded. The oil was not a reward, it was provision. When David wrote, "You anoint my head with oil," in Psalm 23, he was not speaking symbolically. He was describing the shepherd's care over the most vulnerable places. Oil represented healing, protection, and presence. God saw the threats before the sheep EVER felt them.

For us today, this picture is fulfilled in Jesus. Those who are IN Christ are not only visited by the Shepherd, we are kept by Him. The anointing is no longer something placed on us occasionally. The Holy Spirit now dwells within us. What oil once did on the outside, the Spirit now does continually on the inside. **John 14:17** The oil did not make the sheep perfect. It made them protected. They still walked rocky paths. They still needed guidance. But they were covered.

In the New Testament we understand the nature of faith. We don't live trying to avoid every mistake so that God will care for us. We live from the reality that He already does. The Shepherd goes before us, tends to us, and applies what we cannot apply to ourselves. Scripture consistently points to God's initiative, not our effort.

Reasons for Anointing Sheep with Oil:

- Protection from pests - the oil created a barrier against insects like nasal flies that tormented sheep. Just as oil protected sheep from unseen threats, the Spirit of God guards our hearts and minds.

Sheep had to deal with many pests and parasites. There are warble flies, bot flies, heel flies, nose (nasal) flies, deer flies, black flies, mosquitoes, gnats, and other minute, winged parasites.

The attacks on animals can readily turn the golden summer months into a time of torture for sheep and drive them almost to distraction. For relief from this agonizing annoyance sheep will deliberately beat their heads against trees, rocks, posts, or brush. They will rub them in the soil and thrash around against woody growth. In extreme cases of intense infestation, a sheep may even kill itself in a frenzied endeavor to gain respite from the aggravation. Advanced stages of infection from these flies will lead to blindness.

- Healing wounds - it acted as a salve for scratches, cuts, and scrapes acquired from rocky terrain or thorns. Just as oil soothed wounds, the grace of God heals where we have been hurt by life, sin or failure. Woulds that are left unattended can cause a simple scratch to become a life and death issue. **Luke 10:34**

- Soothing irritation - it calmed skin irritated by dry, hot, or dusty conditions. Just as oil kept irritation from taking root, the Spirit keeps accusation, fear and shame from settling in and defining us. Irritations cause just as many issues as wounds. Irritations are distractions that hurt and keep us from eating or other normal activities. The enemy loves dry places. Shame grows where wounds stay untreated. Fear multiplies where irritation is ignored. Oil changes the environment. In Christ, our life is not dry ground, it is cared for. Oil washes away the irritation.

- Preventing infection - by keeping insects away and soothing wounds. It protected the flock from disease and infestation. A shepherd understood that sheep are social creatures. Always next to each other. If infection is not treated in one, it can quickly spread to others in the flock. **Hebrews 12:15** Infections start with outward attacks but grow poisonous when they become internal. The reality is that sometimes things get deep into us that

In the Bible oil is symbolic of the working of the Holy Spirit in our lives. As God's child, He promises to anoint you with the "oil" of His Spirit until your cup runs over. This anointing is His promise to personally lay hands on your life and empower you to do extraordinary things. The imagery of your cup running over demonstrates God's extravagant love and abundance.

David Experienced Three Anointings

– The first time David was anointed was in the company of his brothers. **1 Samuel 16:13** This first anointing was done in a small environment with only a few of David's closest family members present. Nevertheless, from that day forward, something changed in David. The Spirit of the Lord came upon him, and those closest to him recognized it.

– David was anointed a second time while living in the city of Hebron 10 to 15 years later. **2 Samuel 2:4** Here we see that the nation of Judah recognized the hand of God on David's life, so they anointed him as the king over all of Judah. He was king but he was not fully walking in all that God had promised him.

– Shortly thereafter, David was anointed again — this time in the presence of all the tribes of Israel. **2 Samuel 5:3** With each anointing David experienced, there came a greater level of God's authority, and his sphere of influence was expanded. While we are filled with the Holy Spirit there are many seasons of anointing. We are indwelt by the Holy Spirit but there are many fillings. **Ephesians 5:18** This verse is a continuous command, indicating a daily, ongoing, and habitual reliance on the Spirit's power.

We Must Be 'Established' Before We Are Anointed

David's life reveals that God gives His anointing to us in stages, one level of intensity at a time. David and Moses were called by God but both spent time in obscurity to move them to a place of maturity. Both spent significant time caring for sheep. **2 Corinthians 1:21** Notice that being established comes before being anointed.

We may be eager to get started with the vision or dream God has placed in our heart and wish things would begin moving faster. We need to know that God is not focused on the clock like we usually are. He is more concerned about cultivating qualities such as character, integrity, faithfulness, and purity of heart. He must first establish a rock-solid foundation in us that will enable us to sustain the full work He wants to do in and through our life.

The word "established" is a Greek word which describes something firm, durable, dependable, or reliable. Paul is telling us that God must "establish" us first. He must make us firm in faith, durable to withstand any spiritual condition, and steadfast, trustworthy, dependable, and reliable. If we want God to anoint us and use us in a mighty way, we must possess these traits.

It takes firmness to stand for God. Anyone who is used by God must have durability to resist difficult, painful, awkward, or uncomfortable times. God must be assured that we are the kind of person who He can rely on before He takes you to the next level of anointing.

The word translated here as “established” is a legal term that was used to depict the lengthy and intensive investigative process involved to validate if a document was trustworthy. In the ancient world, documents were written by hand. If those writing or copying the documents were not careful, mistakes could be made with serious legal consequences.

For this reason, it was not wise to give one’s final approval to a document until it was tested and proven trustworthy. Before a deal was finalized, the document was scrutinized to validate its reliability. If the document had errors in it, the errors had to be corrected before the papers were signed and the seal of approval was given to proceed. Once the document was “established” as valid, it could then be accepted and authorized. This is what God does to us before He gives us greater anointings. **1 Timothy 5:22 (NKJV & NLT) 1 Timothy 3:6 & 10**

The word anointed is a translation of the Greek word ‘chrio’, which means to rub, to bathe, or to massage. It is the root of the word Christ, which means the Anointed One. In most cases, chrio was used to depict the anointing of oil. Oil was used for anointing kings or those ordained into powerful positions. In the Old and New Testament, it’s primarily used to depict a person who is anointed with the Holy Spirit. This was an act used for setting someone apart for a special, divine, or important purpose.

When a person was anointed with oil in ancient times, a prophet, or a priest, would pour oil into his own hands. Once his hands were doused with oil, he would then place his hands on the person to be anointed and begin to massage or press the oil into the person’s head, hair, or flesh. Oil was expensive and not to be wasted, so the idea of turning a bottle upside down and pouring its contents onto a person was non-existent. Oil was far too precious to be applied in such a manner. To be anointed with oil, it required the anointer to put his hands on the one being anointed. It was impossible to be anointed without someone putting his hands on the recipient in order to apply the oil. In the truest sense, the word “anoint” describes a hands-on experience. The moment hands were publicly laid on someone, it was seen as endorsement or approval.

God does not lay His hands on a person and endorse them until He has first validated that they are trustworthy of such an anointing. This act is so holy that God does not carry it out before doing “due diligence” to validate that a person is trustworthy of a greater anointing. To be clear, when a person is “anointed,” it means God has laid His hands on them and the hand of God is on their life. This is what God did with David after He had tested him and found him to be durable, dependable, and trustworthy of greater anointing.

David declared that his cup runs over . Oil is expensive. **Psalm 133:2** To grasp more fully what he is communicating here; we need to understand an important ancient-world custom. In biblical times when a person came into your home and you wanted to royally and lavishly welcome them; you would pour oil on their head until it was overflowing and running all over. David's use of this ancient custom in connection with the anointing of the Lord tells us something extraordinary. He is saying our Shepherd receives us into His family lavishly and extravagantly. This is why the woman with the alabaster box is remembered so remarkably in scripture. **Matthew 26:6-13**

The pessimist says, "My cup is half empty," and the optimist says, "My cup is half full," the true follower of Christ can proclaim, "My cup is running over!" Remember, the cup is refillable . **1 John 2:20** God's desire is to progressively pour out greater levels of His anointing on your life to the point of overflow. If you want to experience these greater anointings, allow Him to prepare you and cooperate with what He is doing in your life.