
Youth Sunday Sermon – Carter Sessions

A sermon by Cathedral senior Carter Sessions The Fourth Sunday of Easter – Youth Sunday

Psalm 23 has been engrained into me thanks to my grandfather, who has made me memorize bits and pieces of various texts over the years (his favorite is Shakespeare). I remember him handing over the Bible one night after dinner and instructing me to find and recite the psalm. That memory sticks to my brain in the way that only a few very special things stick. I can forget about it for days, months, or years, and it still only takes a second before I'm sitting in the living room reading out loud,

The Lord is my shepherd;
I shall not be in want.
He makes me lie down in green pastures
And leads me beside still waters

And so on and so forth.

At first, I wasn't sure why this memory is so stuck to me. I wasn't interested in religion and I definitely was not interested in memorizing the Bible at that time, but it stuck. Over the years other memories have lingered in the same way. The opening night of my first musical, baking a cake with my grandfather. a long hug from someone I love, playing pretend with my sister. making s'mores that one night in early April. All of these perfect little moments fill me with so much joy and it's a joy that never diminishes. I collect these memories like a child collecting shells or shiny rocks. They may not be meaningful to everyone, but to me, they are precious stones decorating the windowsill.

Among the rocks and shells is a special collection that I keep in a special place. They are my memories connected to this church and to this community. I remember walking to the Cathedral from the children's chapel talking with Ramsay about getting braces. I remember my first Tuesday night Bible study with Maggie. I remember meeting Clayton for the first time and discussing his Emperor Cuzco costume. I remember being a star in the Christmas pageant with my sister, and thinking I was going to pass out from standing that long. I remember listening to MP, Rebie, and Blake chatter about sororities on the ski trip. And I remember singing with Lily at Camp Mikell and hiking with Jackson at Kanuga. I wish I could share all of those memories with you, but the five to seven minutes window I was given to talk would not allow that.

There is a common thread in all of these memories though. My sister, Ramsay, Maggie, Meg, Clayton, MP, Rebie, Blake, Lily, Jackson, and Keith. People. My faith has waxed and waned over the years, but I never take for granted the fact that this community has raised me and given me piles of love, heaps of joy, and a deep connection with those around me. This community has given me my closest friends and mentors. This community has given me a shoulder to cry on, and steady legs to depend on when I need to take a break. This is how I've experienced religion. I have continued to engage in the church not because it helps me always understand my faith, but because I experience such an immeasurable amount of love from everyone I come in contact with here. You can call it experiencing God's love if you'd like or you could simply call it having a strong sense of community. I don't know if I could come up with an adequate description for the feeling. Whatever it is though, I am grateful for it because it has given me a home.

The church community has given me so much I feel it is appropriate to end with a thank you. So thank you to everyone in this congregation. Thank you to all of my youth leaders who have helped me grow up. Thank you to everyone in youth group for being a friend. and as I prepare to leave this physical church and this city, I know

this community will follow me like a shadow wherever I go, so I won't forget to pack up my shiny rocks and pretty seashells before I leave.

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