
Youth Sunday Sermon – Sadler Stukes

**A sermon by Cathedral senior Sadler Stukes
The Fourth Sunday of Easter – Youth Sunday**

Good Morning. I am Sadler Stukes, a lifelong member of the Cathedral of St. Philip, a stalwart graduate of the Cathedral Preschool and now a senior at the Lovett School with plans to attend Georgia Tech in the fall. Around this time last year, my track team was preparing for the region meet. This meet determines if you go to state, so it is a really big deal. I was a part of the 4 by 100 relay team and we decided to purchase a custom baton for regionals. I was a junior on a team full of seniors so I had little say on what the final purchase would look like. We ended up ordering a black baton with the Louis Vuitton logo scattered on it. Naturally, we named it “Louie Baton.”

On the bottom, there was a Latin phrase and a Bible verse. For the Bible verse, we tried to think about the coolest one. We wanted something intimidating yet inspirational. After some debate, we ended up writing “Psalm 23 verse 4” on the baton. It reads, “Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I shall fear no evil for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.” We ended up getting 5th out of the whole region and achieving a personal record for our relay squad and coming half a second away from breaking our school’s record.

I didn’t think much of that verse at first. It was from the book of Psalms so it had to sound nice and elegant. It was just something we put on our baton to look cool. It was all flash at first. My team started a tradition that year too. All of the seniors on the team signed the baton and passed it down to a junior for next year, and it was given to me. So one day during the summer, long after school and track were over, I grabbed the baton and took a deep look at it. I thought about the season and all the memories I made. I thought of the countless handoffs we practiced, getting second at regions, and trying out long jump for the first time. Of course, I saw the flashy Louis Vuitton logo and the Latin phrase on it, but I also saw the Bible verse on it. This time, I started to digest it and internalized what this verse meant to me. Sure, I had heard this verse before but I didn’t fully grasp it until that one summer day.

The psalm opens up by saying, “The Lord is my shepherd.” We have all heard this countless times, but what does it mean to me and others? I feel as though we see part of the Lord in all of the people we know. The Lord has put people in our lives to guide us to the green pastures that the psalm mentions in the next verse. Personally, I have met an amazing group of people through the church and the diocese. Ever since my friend dragged me to Bible study in 6th grade, my life has changed. I met an amazing group of friends all from different schools and backgrounds. I don’t think all of us would’ve been friends without this church. Since I was in 6th grade, our youth group has seen seven different youth directors in my time here at the church, but I have had these amazing friends to walk with me through it all. Clayton showed me what it means to be a Christian when I went through Confirmation in 8th grade. He taught me how to live out my faith, and Keith has taught me about community and how to demonstrate leadership. This group has a special place in my heart. Additionally, all of us, at certain times, have been in our own figurative Valley of the Shadow of Death. Things may have seemed bleak and hopeless, but I know God is all around us. I see God in so many people around me. On those days when I am questioning my faith and wrestling with God, so to speak, I know whom I can turn to. These people are my shepherds and they guide me through the darkest of valleys.

As this chapter in my life comes to an end, I look forward to the future; eagerly awaiting new opportunities to grow my faith and divine things to discover. I look forward to finding God in new people, but I will not forget everything this church has given me. From Tuesday night Bible studies, Sunday School, and leading confirmation classes, I know I will always have a home here at the Cathedral. I know God’s goodness and love

will follow me wherever I go.

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