

PSALM 23

He Restores My Soul

Sermon-Based Study Guide
Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church

Psalm 23.3 | July 5, 2020

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I. Introduction to this Study

This week we continue our summer sermon series in Psalm 23, engaging the phrase “He restores my soul.” What does it mean for God to “restore” our soul?

II. Connect with One Another

Think about a time you needed restoration. What caused the need to be restored? Did you ever feel restored? If so, how did it come about?

III. Engage God’s Word

- a. Slowly and reflectively **read Psalm 23**, perhaps in a different translation than you’re used to. Have you begun to notice anything different about this Spirit-inspired poem as a result of our study?
- b. Psalm 23.2 declares, “He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters.”
What do you think green pastures and quiet waters have to do with the next line, “He restores my soul”? How are these thoughts related?
How have the green pastures of God’s Word and the quiet waters of His Holy Spirit restored your soul?
- c. In the next verse, King David begins speaking of the Shepherd in the second person (from third person “He” to “you”), but for now it is as if he is telling us the story of his being restored. How would you tell that story in your own life?
- d. We know from shepherds how sheep hide under a bush or rock immediately upon realizing they’re lost. Complicating matters, their heavy fleece can sometimes cause sheep to tip over and become unable to stand up on their own.

2nd Samuel 11 and 12 tells the story of David falling morally, with an inappropriate encounter he initiates with Bathsheba. When he realizes his sin may be found out, he tries covering it up. As often happens, sin leads to more sin. As Shakespeare wrote, “our best conscience is not to leave sin undone, but to keep it unknown.” It is only when the prophet Nathan plainly reveals David’s sin that he admits to having “sinned against the LORD.” (**Psalm 51** also recalls this scene)



Our “sheepish” efforts at hiding go all the way back to the Garden: After eating the fruit, “The Lord God called to the man, ‘Where are you?’ He answered, ‘I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.’” (**Genesis 3.9-10**)

When have you tried to hide from the reality your sin? How did God get your attention?

- e. While our English translation renders it, “He restores my soul,” the literal Hebrew reads, “He brings me back.” A good Armenian translation from the fifth century renders it, “He brings me from the wrong path to the right path.”

How does “He brings me back” shift the meaning of this phrase? What’s the difference between being “restored” and being “brought back”?

- f. Digging even deeper, the form of the Hebrew verb used makes it clear that this is an action done *for* us – not something we do. Without help, sheep are unable to find their way home.

How does this deepen your understanding of the verse? Can you think of other passages where someone or something is “brought back”?

- g. To bring sheep back, the Shepherd must first come find them.

How has the Shepherd come after you? Where are you still tempted to run to?

- h. **Read Luke 18.9-14.** How does Jesus’ parable of “the Pharisee and the Tax Collector” further clarify the verse before us?

IV. Pray

- a. Lift up the ongoing dissention and division throughout our country, that God’s justice would be done and that Christ’s peace would be received,
- b. Pray for those you know that have not welcomed God as *their* shepherd, and ask that the Holy Spirit would equip you with words that point them to Jesus, the Restorer of our souls.

V. Digging Deeper

- a. Reflect on these passages which reveal God’s restoration for His people: **Psalm 103.12, Job 14.17, Isaiah 1.18, 38.17, 44.22, Micah 7.19, and Colossians 2.14.**
- b. **Psalm 22, 23, and 24** belong together as a kind of trilogy clearly depicting the past, present, and future of God’s people through Jesus our Good Shepherd. **Psalm 22** is quoted by Jesus on the cross and **Psalm 24** looks ahead to the New Jerusalem, while **Psalm 23** depicts His presence with us now. Read these three chapters in one sitting and see how they speak to you of Jesus the Good Shepherd who laid down his life for us, of Jesus the Great Shepherd who leads us today, and of Jesus the Chief Shepherd who will reign in glory for all eternity.

