

We are continuing our series on the Sabbath as we're looking at what the Lord may have for us in practicing attentiveness to God. We're doing something a little bit different with this message. My hope is it is less instruction and more reflection to provide an encounter of Sabbath here in the scriptures this morning with the beautiful Psalm 23.

But before that, here are a few words from Dallas Willard in his brilliant book, *The Renovation of the Heart*. Willard was both a philosopher and theologian. He spent most of his career at the University of Southern California, and in that, he focused on how humans change. In this chapter on change, he presents what he calls a "reliable model of change." He says there are three components to any change, but specifically spiritual change. Those three elements are vision, intention, and means.

Vision

The first is vision. He said that if anyone is going to change or take on any sort of change, you have to have a vision of what is possible. If I want to become a piano player, I need to watch Leo as he plays piano. I then have this vision of what could be possible for a piano player and what life would look like as a piano player. For us as Christ-followers, when we envision wanting to become like Christ, we need to marinate and saturate ourselves in the gospels so we see what Christ is like. It is why we need to understand a vision of what could be. He says that this is the first step of change.

Intention

The second is this idea of intention. An intention is where we set our will, our spirit, and our efforts to move towards that change. It is one thing to want to change. It's a different thing to intend to change. This intention is where we then take on the very wanting to change and move in the direction of actually changing. If you've ever wanted to get in better shape, this is the moment where you've stopped looking at blogs about running and losing weight and actually got dressed the next day and went out a little early to work out. This is intention.

Means

The problem is intention will only take us so far. Once you intend to change, you need this third category, what Willard calls the means. What he means by this is the very right step in understanding how to change. To work these two metaphors I've drawn, if I want to become a piano player, I'm going to need to learn scales. I'm going to need to understand how to read music. I'm going to need the sort of skillset and instruction that will allow me to become a piano player. If I want to become a runner, I need to know what it takes to go and run. I need to understand the proper diet, the proper rhythms of running and rest,

and all of the things in between. You have to have the actual means of change.

What Willard beautifully does in this chapter is recognize that in the spiritual life, we are not left alone for our own possibility of change. In fact, it is the Holy Spirit that does the work of changing and partners with us. Although we generate a vision, and we come to a place of intention where we decide to become more like Christ, and then we look for the proper means in which to participate in this change, we do so all with the Holy Spirit's power, not our own. This is the difference between wanting to become a piano player or get in better shape versus wanting to become like Christ. We are not left to our own devices.

In the past couple of weeks, we've been talking about the idea of means. How do we change? How does Sabbath do something for us in becoming like Christ? My hope in this message is to actually not focus as much on the means, but rather, on the vision. I want you to see what is possible in a life. The life that we see, or the vision we have in Psalm 23, is a vision of life that is actually possible to live from. Most of us, myself included, often suffer with a diminished view of what is actually possible in discipleship to Jesus. I believe that Jesus can actually transform our hearts in such a way that we become more like Christ, taking on the very inner disposition of Jesus into our own being. I believe that.

Most of us struggle with thinking that this can actually take place and that progress in the spiritual life can happen. But as we all recognize, these disciplines, whether it's silence and solitude or Sabbath, are things that do not actually change us. Hear me clearly on this. The practices do not change you. They are the means through which we open our lives up to the work of the Holy Spirit, and the Spirit does that transformative work.

So you are not a better Christian if you Sabbath or don't Sabbath. You are not earning merits with the Lord. You're not receiving crowns in heaven or whatever it is. Rather, it is simply a practice that we have seen throughout church history that myself included are transformative and change lives. It is in opening our lives up and allowing the Holy Spirit to work within us that change happens. The spiritual disciplines do not change us, just like Sabbath, but they make space for us to engage with God and allow the Holy Spirit to speak and do the transformative work within us.

Psalm 23 is one of those texts that might be the most, arguably one of the most famous in all of the scriptures, maybe one of the most memorized. I recently have been memorizing this with my seven-year-old, and she's done remarkably well. We're about four verses through. It's the cutest moment of my week when we do that together. It's just a beautiful thing.

Psalm 23 is a beautiful psalm, a vision of what life with God could potentially be like. *"The Lord is my Shepherd, I lack nothing (v. 1)*. Think about that phrase, the Lord is my Shepherd. Now, this verse is what sets the stage for the entire psalm. This verse is from which everything else flows until we get to verse 6, which is a beautiful capstone. Everything flows from verse 1 and out of verse 1 it's pointing toward verse 6.

"The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing." Now the imagery of the sheep/shepherd dynamic is really one that colors the whole psalm. And in the ancient world, the term shepherd was used to refer not just to those tending sheep but also to a king whose task it was to protect and provide for the flock.

So David, who was a shepherd, is reversing the images that have probably given shape to most of his life. Rather than him being the shepherd, he's reflecting on this and saying, "The Lord, Yahweh, the Creator of the universe, is, in fact, our Shepherd." And instead of David being the shepherd, he flips it and puts us in the place of the sheep. What fundamentally is in this image is that you and I and David are not in charge. I actually think this is gospel. This is good news because for most of us, if we were in charge, life would not necessarily go as planned. We are alleviated from those responsibilities.

Now what most scholars think about this particular psalm is for all of its beauty and idealism and all of that romantic grandeur in the text; scholars believe that this is spoken from a context of great danger and fear that plagued David's life. If you're familiar with David's story, you'll know that he often had bouts of fear. He often a hard life, both from the things that were brought on him and from his own decisions and sinful practices.

Even from this context of deep fear, there's a resounding confidence in Yahweh as his Shepherd. See, this proclamation that you are not in charge, that you and I are in the care of another, is the good news that we need. Because here's the kicker with this. The beauty of not being in charge, of allowing the Lord to be our Shepherd, the beauty of this is found in the surrendering to this. You cannot allow the Lord to be your Shepherd if you're constantly resisting it. The beauty is found in surrender.

If you are no longer in charge, that means that you have surrendered your kingdoms, your will, your authority, and your sphere of influence. You have surrendered that to God, submitting it to the Shepherd. You're offering your whole life. The place in which life with God begins is at the place of surrender. Sabbath is a practice of surrender. It is a practice where we regularly rehearse this dynamic in which we turn over our lives to God and recognize that he is in charge, not us. When we cease, when we stop, when we come to this regular rhythm and repetitive communion with God in Sabbath, we realize the world is going on just fine without us because we are not in charge. The Shepherd is in charge. The Lord is my Shepherd.

God is Good and He is Present

Eugene Peterson, in his book, *When Kings Fishers Catch Fire*, says that the Shepherd Lord figure dominates the prayer poem, and he says this,

"God is good and present. Life is a miracle and brims with beauty and love." God is good, and he is present. If there is one thing to take from this morning, if there's one thing to understand from Psalm 23, it's when we declare that the Lord is our Shepherd, we can do so because God is good, and he's present.

For so many of us, we tend to project onto God so much of our own wounds and damage that we assume and exchange them with God himself. We bring and project onto God our childhood wounds and our hurts. We accuse God of our shortcomings. We reconstruct and load onto God all of our own self-centeredness, assuming that God exists to serve us.

This is a hard challenge because God can carry and does, in fact, want us to bring those things to him but not project them onto the image of God. God is different. He is good. He is present. He's a Shepherd who wants to carry those burdens that we project onto him. We rest before God because he is good and present. The sheep, we are able to recognize and bring all of this to God, not project onto him, because we are covered and cared for by our Shepherd, the Lord.

Here's maybe the bottom line when we connect this to Sabbath. We Sabbath because Jesus, our Good Shepherd, is our Sabbath rest. When we bring these things to the Lord, we are turning them over to him and as Hebrews teaches, we are finding our rest within the very presence of God. This is why it flows into this next line. "I lack nothing." I lack nothing. This is the natural result of the Lord being your Shepherd. If, in fact, you have yielded and surrendered your life to the good Shepherd, you will lack nothing.

We often quote Saint Augustine, that fourth-century theologian, who wrote in his book, *The Confessions*, on the opening page, "In yourself you rouse us, giving us delight in glorifying you, because you made us with yourself as our goal, and our heart is restless until it finds rest in you."

See, Augustine, so many centuries before, recognizes that we were created for God; we were created to rest in Jesus. He says you gave us the delight in glorifying you. You made us with God. God, you have made us with you as our goal. And so we then, in turn, are restless. We cannot admit that we lack nothing because we have not rested fully in the very presence and being of God. Until we get to that place, until we yield fully to our Good Shepherd, we will not naturally be able to confess that we lack nothing.

Remember in Matthew 6:33 Jesus said, *"But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."* The Lord is my Shepherd, I lack nothing. I mean, imagine being able to honestly say that. To live in such a way where you don't lack accomplishment, you don't lack the next promotion for your identity; you don't lack the next purchase, the myth that will create and give you fullness. Imagine lacking nothing. *"The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing."*

This permeates the rest of the psalm. And in Sabbath, what we do is rehearse this reality, but what you'll find and what flows from this are four different elements that comprise a Sabbath practice in which we learn

and rehearse this idea that the Lord is our Shepherd. Unless we come before the Lord and actually lay down our life in some manner, where we say, "God, you are the Shepherd. You are the one in control." Until we yield to that, this idea of lack will always be there for us. We fall over and over for the carrot on the string trick. Just strive a little harder, run a little faster, earn a little more, buy that thing, and then we'll arrive. But here David says, the way you get to a place in which you lack nothing is by yielding to the Lord our Shepherd.

On Sabbath, we practice that. We rehearse that. In the same way, a piano player is learning scales. So too, we come to Sabbath as a way to regularly index our hearts towards the very presence of God. Because we need that, I need that weekly reminder that I am not what I do. I am not what I accumulate. But rather, I am in the care of another. I am in the care of our Good Shepherd.

We started this Sabbath series on week one with the habit card. There were four elements that we believe comprised what you do on Sabbath. Because on Sabbath, you don't just stop and stare at a wall. Activity is not wrong. You do, in fact, do some things. And what I see in this text are these four elements that arise to the surface.

We Stop on Sabbath

The first you'll see in verses 2-3 is this idea of stopping. We've talked at length about that. In verse 4, you'll see this idea of rest. In verse 5, you'll see what it means to delight in the Lord. And in verse 6, you'll see it all culminate in importance towards worship of God. We'll walk through this and just take it part by part and maybe add a little bit of grit, a little texture to what it could look like for us to rehearse this very practice that the Lord is our Shepherd.

"He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he refreshes my soul. He guides me along the right paths for his name's sake" (vv.2-3). The Shepherd provides three things for the sheep. He provides green pastures, quiet waters, and safe paths. All of it culminates in this refreshment of your soul. Notice a few things about it.

Green Pastures

What sheep can lay down in green pastures? Well, it's a sheep that's not hungry. If a sheep were hungry, if it was not satisfied, it would not be lying in the fields. It would be feasting on the grass. There's a sense in which the Good Shepherd provides for us in such a way that we can lay down in the pastures. Also, notice here that he makes us lie down in green pastures.

The thing about Sabbath and the way that we are wired as humans is that we are created, as we talked about in week two, with this rhythm in which we are meant to both work and rest. But often, we run out of control and focus far more on the work than the rest. Here, it seems like the Good Shepherd knows that. He understands that. And he says, "I'm not going to just make it an offer. I'm going to make you lie down in green pastures."

The reality is we cannot go that long without rest. We have to settle down. The difference is will we rest in our own power and ability, or will we rest in Jesus? Will we rest in the green fields that are offered by the

Lord? *"He makes me lie down in green pastures."* We do that because we are satisfied in Jesus. He has provided for us. We can rest content; we can be sure of God's provision. That's why he leads us to green pastures.

Quiet Waters

Second is the quiet waters. Same thing as the green pastures. Why would a sheep rest beside quiet waters? Well, they're certainly not thirsty. If the sheep was thirsty, if it was striving, if it was longing for something outside of the Good Shepherd, then it would be diving into the water. It would be partaking in it. It reminds me of John 4. Remember when the woman approaches Jesus at the well and she asks Jesus for some water. Jesus, as this sort of cryptic response, says, *"Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst"* (John 4:13-14b).

See, Jesus, our Good Shepherd, satisfies something much deeper beneath the surface than the physical need. He'll do that too, but he says there's a thirst within you. There's a restlessness that we talked about last week that feels like it can never be satiated. It's there; it's aching. It's what drives us to do whatever the things are that we do. But Jesus says, "I have water in which you will partake and never be thirsty again." The Good Shepherd leads us beside quiet waters.

Safe Paths

Third, he brings us along safe paths. He guides us along these paths for his namesake. The sheep that is at rest, the sheep that is contented in its Shepherd, brings glory to the Shepherd. David says that the Good Shepherd guides us along the paths of righteousness. He teaches us; he trains us. He instructs us on how to live this life well. And in doing so, we actually reflect glory back to God. He says, "You lead us along these safe paths."

He then gets to this beautiful line, *"He refreshes my soul."* How many of us need our souls refreshed? The word here literally means to turn back, to return to the place at which your soul was supposed to be. In the very presence of God, he refreshes my soul. I would suggest that we cannot find this refreshment outside of Jesus. You can find physical rest. You can find a vacation and a day off. All those things are good, healthy things, but they will not ultimately satisfy the deepest longing of your soul. What we need for that is to rest in our Good Shepherd. *"The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing."* So the first step of Sabbath, as we've talked about, is to stop. He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me by quiet waters. He guides me along the path for his namesake. He refreshes my soul.

We Rest on Sabbath

Look down at verse 4. Here we encounter the second element of Sabbath, this idea of rest. *"Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me" (v. 4).* The life on offer from Jesus that we practice on Sabbath is this idea of living without fear.

One of the things I love about the Psalms and the scriptures, in general, is they're ruthlessly honest with our human experience. As you continue to marinate in the Psalms, David is just ruthless about where the

condition of his heart is. Often, he's crying out to God, "Lord, save me, heal me, fix me. The enemies are coming around me." He never skirts the hard reality of life. But yet here it says, "Even though I walk through the darkest valley," not around it, not fly above it and over it, the valley is not taken away, he says, "But even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil for the Shepherd is with me."

Fear pervades our restlessness. Do you remember last week when we talked about how as finite beings with an infinite desire in us, we are restless as we search for our meaning and satisfaction in finite things? The reason we run to those is because it's based in fear. Fear I won't have enough. Fear that my retirement account won't suffice. Fear that my identity will be lost if I don't get that promotion. Fear that I'll miss out on an experience. If I don't have that fear, then I'll be looked down upon, or be lonely, or whatever that fear is. The reason we are restless is because we live and have made friends with fear.

David says I will walk through the darkest valley, and I will fear no evil because why? The Lord is my Shepherd, I lack nothing. If we get to the place where we recognize the Lord is, in fact, our Shepherd. He is good. He's present through all the circumstances; even in the darkest valley, we will fear no evil. Church, imagine a life without fear. No fear of aging or death. No fear of disease or hunger. No fear of any person or creature, not even the loss of all of our possessions. You can live in such a way where you trust and walk in contentment with the Lord where fear no longer rules you.

Now, this isn't blind optimism. Again, he's in the darkest valley. As older translations will say, he's in the valley of the shadow of death. You're in the midst of it, but you have a different perspective because the Shepherd is with you. You aren't leaning on your own ability. Remember, you are not in charge. You are in the control and care of someone else. The Lord is my Shepherd, I lack nothing.

Eugene Peterson, in that same book, writes,

Psalm 23 is a convincing witness that God is our Shepherd, that God is the Shepherd who preserves us, accompanies us, and rules us. He doesn't just create us and turn us loose to make the best we can of it. He doesn't just let us fend for ourselves until we die and are hauled before the judgment seat for an accounting of our conduct. He is the Shepherd who guides us in our wanderings and sustains us in our fugitive lives.

The Lord is my Shepherd. We rest because we don't have to fear. If you are living in fear, you cannot rest. Have you ever stayed up at night a bit restless, not been able to fall asleep? My guess is if you're like me, it's because of some sort of fear. There was a circumstance, there was something you were facing, there was a fear that was overcoming you, and it's in those moments that we need to remember, "Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I'll fear no evil."

On Sabbath, we rest because we rehearse this idea that God is with us in whatever we're going through. The Hebrew word for rest can also be translated as exhale. We exhale before the Lord because we understand

that when fear overtakes us, our bodies go into a fight-or-flight reaction. A reaction that is meant to help us, to protect us, but it causes us to tense up and hold our breath. When the Lord is your Shepherd, when you recognize he's good and present in the valley of the shadow of death, that is when you can exhale in the presence of the Good Shepherd. If fear dominates, we cannot exhale. But there's a way in which we walk with the Lord where we rest, not in our own abilities, but in the presence of someone who is taking care of us and providing for us.

We Delight on Sabbath

We stop on Sabbath. We rest on Sabbath. But third, look down at verse 5; we delight on Sabbath. "*You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows*" (v. 5). What's been interesting as we've rolled out this practice of Sabbath that the idea of delight has been the one in which I've had the most conversations with people. And I can't help but think how interesting that is in our particular context, a sort of merit-based world in which we have a hard time delighting. I'm guessing it's because we're constantly striving. We don't know what it means to stop and just delight in what God has given us. We have a hard time resting in that sort of contentment.

Notice the brutal honesty. "*You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.*" It's in the midst of it. It's facing the struggle, facing the enemy. There's a way in which God is saying, "See, have a seat at the table. Delight in the very presence of your enemies." This is fascinating in light of Jesus' teaching on enemies that they're kind of enemies, but yet they're also in the kingdom of God. They become a sort of friend dynamic. And Jesus, God, our Good Shepherd, is preparing a table before us.

Then he gets to this phrase where he says, "*You anoint my head with oil, my cup overflows.*" He's saying that there in the midst of the dark valley, in the midst of the enemies, God is laying the table for us to delight in his provision. And it's in his provision that we eat in the very presence of our enemy, that our head is anointed with oil, which has this idea of being set aside, of uniqueness, where you're set apart. It's a comforting image.

When you anoint someone with oil, you're generally also praying for their healing. You're praying for their restorations. Then he says, "...my cup overflows." The abundance of God is on display when we come before the Lord in whatever the circumstance is, and he's pouring out his love onto us to the place where it overflows and overflows. Unless we have a rhythm in which we delight, we miss that God is pouring out abundance on us. Until we stop and look around, we can miss it.

This morning, as I was walking across the street, I was remembering that it seemed like forever that it's been raining on Sundays. As I was crossing Shell Boulevard, walking to the church, I began to hear birds chirping and realized that Spring was coming. Spring, this season baked into the created order where new life is bursting out of all sorts of death. Easter's coming. Easter is here. Good Friday is here! All of that is coming as a way in which we remember and delight in the very goodness and abundance of God. We remember that in the darkest valley, the enemies don't have

the last word, but rather we delight in God's creation. He's reminding us that he is the one who provides.

When you delight in a good Sabbath meal, you are not doing so just to indulge yourself. You're doing so because you remember that taste is a gift from God, that mangoes have flavor, and that tacos exist. All of that is a way in which you recognize the goodness of the Creator, and you partake in that as an act of worship toward the Lord. You confess his goodness and lean into that and say, "The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing." In the presence of God, I lack nothing. In the presence of my enemies, I lack nothing. It's a way in which we counter form against a world that says it's broken, and we remind ourselves of God's refrain in Genesis, that it's good, it's good, it's good, it's very good.

Sabbath is a way in which we step off of the treadmill and delight in the midst of whatever the circumstance is. We confess our cup overflows. It overflows because we have a good and present Shepherd who's with us. So we stop, we rest, we delight, and then look down at verse 6—we worship. All of it has been pointing toward this. As I said at the beginning, it flows out of verse 1, but it's pointing toward verse 6.

"Surely your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever" (v. 6). Sabbath is this practice in which we rehearse dwelling in the house of the Lord forever. It's pointing towards this, but catch that it says, *"Surely goodness and love will follow me."*

That word "follow" is actually pretty benign in English. In Hebrew, it has this idea of chasing after us, pursuing us. It's in hot pursuit of us—love and goodness are seeking after us. It says surely that love and goodness follow me all the days of my life. Regardless of circumstance, regardless of the enemies of the dark valley, whatever it is, love and goodness are pursuing us. They coming after us.

Then he says, *"I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever."* This is a fundamental act of worship. That we dwell in the very presence of God. In Sabbath it's pointing towards this idea of communion, of worship to God in which we sit in his presence and rest secure in him as our good Shepherd.

Most of us have a diminished view of worship. We tend to look at worship as what Brandon and his team does, which is very much an act of worship. But worship is so much more than that. Worship is singing, and it's more than singing. Even in our singing, the act of that is not the purpose of worship. The purpose is to come before the Lord and reflect on who he is and what he has done. It's us coming before God offering a whole reorientation of our life.

Music is one of those ways that it gets into our minds. I mean, you remember music better than you remember me talking at you for 30 minutes. Worship is music, but it's beyond that. It's connecting with God. It's going before the scriptures. It's resting in him. All of these things are acts of worship. So when you stop, when you rest, when you delight, all of these things are pointing towards the very worship of God.

We practice Sabbath so that we can dwell in the house of the Lord forever, not because we've earned it because of that, but rather because

we're training, indexing our hearts to recognize that God is the Shepherd over all of creation. It is his world. It is his good world, and it is a safe place in which we exist with God, who is the author of where this whole creative thing is going. One day it is coming to the place where he renews it and restores it. And in Sabbath, in worship, we are preparing ourselves for that creation that's beginning to break in here and now.

That's the Easter story. New creation is bursting onto the scene, and we catch these glimpses of it. Sabbath is one of the ways in which we lay aside all of that to draw our attentiveness, our undistracted minds towards Jesus so that our lives open up the whole reorientation of who we are to the Lord.

An Old Testament scholar, Derek Kidner, says this of Psalm 23.

Depth and strength underlie the simplicity of this psalm. Its peace is not escape; its contentment is not complacency: there is readiness to face deep darkness and imminent attack, and the climax reveals a love that homes towards no material goal but to the Lord Himself. Derek Kidner

He says the whole thing is not about escaping your pain, about escaping your problems. Peace is not found there. Peace is found not in a material goal but in the Lord himself. The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing.

Church, this is the invitation of Psalm 23. A life so caught up and enraptured in Jesus that we begin to live from a place without lack because we recognize God's provision and care are more than enough. Sabbath is simply a way in which we begin to rehearse that because we need practice. We need practice in calling the Lord our Shepherd.

So what I want to do to close is rather than just pray and move on, I want to lead us in a meditation of this psalm. I want to review these words. And I invite you to commune with God in a really small five-minute Sabbath, where we come before the Lord and recognize the ways in which our life intersects with this text.

For the next few minutes, I want you to sit in the presence of the Lord, your Shepherd. And as we go, I'll prompt you with a few questions to ask before the Lord, but I just want to give you a space to pray, to commune with God in the scriptures.

So as you close your eyes and begin to quiet your heart, I want you to hear these words. *"The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing."* All of us follow someone. All of us follow something. And maybe to begin, we just begin with a place of confession. Maybe the Lord is stirring something in your heart that says, "I have looked to other things as my shepherd." Let's confess that to the Lord. Just spend a moment saying, "Lord, you are my Shepherd, but I've been following someone or something else." Bring that before the Lord. To what or to whom have you sought to fill that deep ache in your soul that isn't God? Confess that to the Good and Present Shepherd.

Lord, we declare that you are our Shepherd, and we rest not in our own ability but in your good care and provision. Lord, deepen our trust in you. Deepen our rest in you today. Help us to let go and trust in your care.

"He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside quiet waters. He refreshes my soul. He guides me along the paths for his namesake." Lord, what do you want us to know of your abundant provision? Lord, I pray that we would see those pastures, see that water, and rest because we know you are our Good Shepherd.

What do you need to stop in your life? What might the Lord be highlighting that you can lay aside so you can rest in the presence of your Good Shepherd? Maybe your prayer is, "God, make me lie down in green pastures because I can't do it on my own."

Maybe it's stress from your job. Maybe a lack of job prospects and the fear there. Maybe it's relational stress or loneliness. Where do you stop trusting in your own ability and hand that over to the Lord? Maybe you're in a place of indecision. You're in a place of confusion, and you look to the Lord to guide you in the paths for his namesake. If that's you, I invite you to hear this promise that "Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me, your rod, and your staff, they comfort me."

Whatever fear, whatever concern, anxiety, or stress that rises within you, don't tuck that aside, but bring that before the Lord and say, "Lord, this is my valley. This is my dark valley. Give me eyes to see you. Direct my sight to you, Lord."

May there be a healing of this fear that plagues you.

Lord, you are with me. Lord, you are with us. Even in that gap between God's presence in my life, Lord, you are there; make us aware of your Spirit. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil, my cup overflows. Lord, we delight in you and in your provision. We delight in you as an act of worship. We delight in your creation as an act of worship. May you stir in us a vision for the beauty of this world. Let that fill and saturate our minds. May that fill and saturate our imaginations Lord.

"Surely your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever." Lord, may your goodness and love continue to pursue us, but God, may we turn. May we welcome that. May we embrace that. God, out of that, may we worship. May we learn to dwell in your house forever. Lord, we thank you for being our Shephard. Help us not to lack anything outside of that in Jesus' name, amen.

This manuscript represents the bulk of what was preached at CPC. For further detail, please refer to the audio recording of this sermon.

© 2023 Central Peninsula Church, Foster City, CA
Catalog No.1474-4FC