

SERMON NOTES

SUNDAY 15.12.24

PREACHER: PS GLENN COCHRAN

PSALMS OF HOPE:
PSALM 23

BECOMING CHRISTLIKE

BEING, THINKING & DOING

Conviction of a Disciple: As we journey in our growth into Christlikeness, we become more secure in our identity in Christ, learning to trust God as our Good Shepherd who is present with us in every season of life.

OVERVIEW

Psalm 23 invites us to trust the Good Shepherd who provides for us, protects us in the most difficult places in life, and pursues us with His goodness and love.

ACTION

Step 1: Reflect: Where do you sense the Shepherd providing for or protecting you in this season? How can you respond in gratitude?

Step 2: Commit: What could it look like for you to trust God more deeply in the “valleys” of your life right now?

Step 3: Act: Take 10 minutes this week to sit quietly in God’s presence, naming the ways He has pursued you with His goodness and love.

THOUGHT

SCRIPTURE: PSALM 23

Psalm 23 begins with an image that captures the imagination of humanity for thousands of years: “The Lord is my shepherd.” It’s a simple line, almost too familiar, but it carries a truth that reframes everything!

This psalm is not about a quiet life of sheep forever grazing on easy, perfect hills. It’s written from the heart of David, a man who had walked through valleys of suffering and loss and who had discovered that even there, the abiding presence of his Shepherd provides, protects, and pursues.

The opening verses (1-3) speak of provision: “I lack nothing.” This is a truth that is so counter-cultural to our Western, self-sufficient world. Everything we have, everything we need—life itself—is a gift from God. The deeper question, of course, is “Do we truly really believe that?” Do we trust the One who gives, not grudgingly, but joyfully - a Father that delights in providing good things for his children? Advent is a season that reminds us of this truth: God’s provision for humanity doesn’t come in a palace or seated on a throne, but lying vulnerably as an infant in a humble manger.

But the Shepherd is not just our provider; He is also our protector. The psalmist cries out: “Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me.” David doesn’t pretend the valleys don’t exist. As we explored last week, the psalms of scripture don’t deny the reality of life - its suffering or its shadows. Instead, they remind us that the Shepherd walks with us in all of these experiences. He is YHWH - the God who goes with us. God doesn’t stand at a distance, shouting instructions or offering vague assurances. No, He is in and through all, the whole everything, He is the very GROUND of BEING itself. He protects us—not by keeping us from every hard thing, but by holding us and carrying us through it.

What’s fascinating in verse 6 is that the psalm shifts his language. God is no longer “He,” a distant figure out there that can be talked about. Instead, He becomes “You” - the personal language of closeness and relationship. “You are with me.” When we walk through the valleys, we stop talking about God and start being with Him. We learn to lean into His presence in a way we never could on the comfortable grassy fields.

And then comes the pursuit. “Surely goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life.” The word “follow” doesn’t mean God is trailing behind us, passively observing. The Hebrew word is much stronger—it means to pursue. The Shepherd chases us down - is in hot pursuit with His goodness and love, refusing to let us go. This psalm is deeply personal. David doesn’t speak use words like “we” or “us.” This is his story with the Shepherd, and it invites us to have the same. Jesus, the Good Shepherd, takes these ancient words and fills them with new life: “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep” (John 10:11). Advent declares this truth: The Shepherd has come, and He provides, protects, and pursues us to the very end.

DISCUSSION

1. Why is it hard to trust God as our provider in a culture that values self-reliance? How can we support one another in living out this trust?
2. How have you experienced God's presence and protection in your own "valleys"? How did it shape your faith?
3. What does it mean to be pursued by God's goodness and love? How can we live with this confidence in our daily lives?

PRAYER

Jesus, our Good Shepherd - thank You for providing for us, protecting us, and pursuing us with Your unfailing love. Teach us to trust You in every season—on the mountaintops and in the valleys. Help us dwell in Your presence and find rest in the truth that You are with us, now and always.

Amen.