

# MY SHEPHERD

PSALM 23

*The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. Psalm 23*

Groves  
Ministries

Psalm 23 paints a picture of a loving, caring, and concerned shepherd. Our Good Shepherd sustains our mind, body, and soul in the present and in the future. He guides us to rest (v. 2) and restoration (v. 3).

Today, instead of aspiring to luxury vacations or materials, we aspire to busyness. While this might signal on social media or in certain social circles that we have arrived, the busyness takes its toll. Ask anyone trying to balance work, family, health, and a social life how they're doing, and they will often say, "I'm tired." Workers are burning out. "Being addicted to chronic busyness might feel good because of the adrenaline rush you get from the stress of all the activities, but it can be harmful to your health. The clinical staff at the Mayo Clinic warns, 'The long-term activation of the stress-response system—and the subsequent overexposure to cortisol and other stress hormones—can disrupt almost all your body's processes.' Those stress hormones can increase your risk of health problems such as anxiety, depression, headaches, heart disease, sleep problems and even memory and concentration impairment. As a society, we need to stop glorifying being busy. We need to stop competing against each other for who is the busiest. Chronic busyness should not be a badge of honor or status symbol. It is a warning sign that things need to change".

Psalm 23 makes the believer take an important look at their life. God is calling each of us to slow down, rest, and be restored in him. Instead of pursuing paths of achievement or wealth, can we allow God to lead us in paths of righteousness (v. 3) for the sake of the Lord? This doesn't mean that we will never grow weary or that our work, family, or personal responsibilities are unrighteous. God can and does work in and through our everyday lives. However, the focus and pace of our lives need to be influenced by the leadership of the God who sustains us, gives us rest, and restores our souls. Our pursuits need to fall in the appropriate line of priority after our pursuit of God. It only makes sense that the shepherd knows his sheep and what they need. He is able to provide for those needs, when we allow him.

David was not a perfect person, nor was his life one of ease and comfort. Even after being anointed as God's chosen king, he faced incredible hardship, and his path to kingship was fraught with tension and struggle. David was banished from Saul's court (1 Samuel 18:13). He was given a wife "as a snare," but instead his wife loved him (1 Samuel 18:21–28). David was on the run because Saul wanted to kill him (1 Samuel 19; 21; 23). He had to live off the land (1 Samuel 25). All of this happened before he even became king! David was likely well acquainted with weariness, but he was also well acquainted with the Shepherd. It seems that "the tender care of the shepherd described in the previous verse had its effect. David's soul was restored by the figurative green pastures and still waters the shepherd brought to him". By the time David wrote Psalm 23, his soul had been restored by the shepherd over and over again. When we grow weary, when the struggles of this world—some out of our control and some directly related to our sin—come our way, we must return to the shepherd's green pastures and still waters again and again. God is our sustainer.

For many of us, the idea that we have to return to God again and again flies directly in the face of our pride and self-sufficiency. We imagine a God who is tired of hearing from us, tired of picking us up and dusting us off and sending us back out, tired of forgiving us, tired of dealing with us. But that isn't the nature of God. We can return again and again, welcomed by his immeasurable grace, for the sustenance we need to walk in the paths of righteousness that he leads us toward.

The Lord can lead us to still waters, and while he could make us drink, he often does not force his will upon us. We may find ourselves feeling angry at God or disappointed by our circumstances. It is in these times we must remember that our feelings are not always dependable. Eugene Peterson writes, "My feelings are important for many things. They are essential and valuable. They keep me aware of much that is true and real. But they tell me next to nothing about God or my relation to God. My security comes from who God is, not from how I feel" (A Long Obedience in the Same Direction, 80). When God leads us to water or makes us lie down in green pastures, we can trust him, regardless of our feelings, to meet our needs.

## [Some questions to think about...]

- What is one thing that stood out to you from this week's message?
- Is it hard for you to ask for help? Why or why not? How does this affect your view of God as your shepherd?
- When you are weary, what "green pastures" and "still waters" does God lead you to for restoration?
- What is a practical way you can make time for rest or restorative activity this week?

SEPTEMBER 6, 2020  
ONLINE SERVICE  
SUNDAY 09:30 a.m.



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## Announcement

Sep 6 (Sun) HOME Worship Service *with Holy Communion*  
Communion Offering for UM Communities

**Back-to-Church! (Outdoor Service)**

**UG Time / Place: Sep 13 (Sun) 9:30 am @ UG Parking Lot**

**WG Time / Place: Oct 18 (Sun) 11:30 am @ WG Parking Lot**

**\*\*Church Reopening Plan is subject to change.**

Sep 6 (Sun) Kadence MacNeill's Birthday

Sep 9 (Wed) Belinda Dalton's Birthday

Sep 10 (Thu) Crystal Rodriguez's Birthday

Sep 12 (Sat) Rosalie Hymer's Birthday

## Opening Hymn (UMH 64)

Holy, Holy, Holy! Lord God Almighty (<https://youtu.be/zKHqWQ-FqPo>)

## Call to Worship

Come out of the darkness of despair  
into the brightness of God's transforming love.

**We praise God for God's presence with us!**

Prepare your hearts and spirits to receive God's mercy and healing.

**We thank God for God's mercy toward us.**

Come, let us praise and worship God who is always with us.

**Thanks be to God at all times and in all places. AMEN.**

## Hymn of Praise (UMH 421)

Make Me a Captive, Lord (<https://youtu.be/u3z8h23dJP0>)

## Morning Prayer

Lord of light, in the midst of darkness and fear, you call us to be a community of peace, love and hope. You remind us of the blessings we have and the opportunities to share those blessings with others. We praise and thank you for all these things and for your constant presence with us. Today, as a community seeking peace and healing, we offer the names of loved ones who are struggling with illness, with loss, with feelings of alienation and fear. As we lift up our concerns, we also offer messages of love and rejoicing.

Lord, we thank you for your healing mercies and your sustaining love for us. We are confident in your abiding presence with us. Help us to be faithful to you in all times and in all places. Give us the grace to accept the forgiveness you have offered to each of us. For it is in Jesus' name that we offer this prayer. AMEN.

## Psalter Reading

Psalm 149

## Scripture Reading

Psalm 23

## Message

**"MY SHEPHERD"**

Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/thegroveschurches/>)

Website (<https://groveschurches.org/>)

## Affirmation of Faith

The Apostles' Creed \_ UMH 881

## Offering

\*Offering (CHECK) by mail to:

UGUMC \_ Krissi Reed (50 Burt St, Bridgeton NJ 08302)

WGUMC \_ Cheryl Fox (1940 Coles Mill Rd, Franklinville NJ 08322)

\*\*Offering by ONLINE:

<http://www.gnjumc.org/onlinegiving> Or <http://groveschurches.org>

UGUMC Church number: 9068 (Norma)

WGUMC Church number: 9071 (Pittsgrove)

## Holy Communion (UMH 12)

## Closing Song (UMH 530)

Are Ye Able (<https://youtu.be/dDu0dtvraqbk>)

## Benediction

[PRAYER REQUEST] \_ Let us pray together.

### 1. For all the congregation of Groves Ministries.

Lord, surround us with Your divine hedge of protection. Encompass us round about with Your strength and Your might. May You shelter us, that those who love Your name may exult in You.

### 2. For our nation and the world.

Lord, we pray for our nation and the whole world during the pandemic. Grant Your peace, Your comfort, and Your healing. Be with us, Lord. Amen.