

**He Gives Me Rest**

Psalm 23:1-6

Do you remember the title of our sermon series on Psalm 23? It is “[If the Lord is My Shepherd.](#)” As I shared last Sunday, Psalm 23 was written by King David in his old age, reflecting on who God is, appreciating and praising God’s goodness and mercy throughout his life. God’s goodness and mercy as our Shepherd, as described in Psalm 23, can be summarized with three “Ps”: [God’s Presence, Protection, and Provision.](#)

**How did King David come to understand God as his Shepherd, who provides presence, protection, and provision for His people?**

[First of all, it came from his own experiences with God.](#)

King David endured a great deal of hardship throughout his life. Doeg the Edomite reported David’s activities to Saul, leading to the massacre of priests who had helped David. The Ziphites, who were from the tribe of Judah, to which David belonged, informed King Saul of David’s hiding places twice. Absalom, David’s son, tried to overthrow his father’s kingship. Ahithophel, his trusted counselor, joined this rebellion. David’s army commander, his nephew Joab, disregarded David’s commands on several occasions and ultimately turned against David near the end of his reign by supporting Adonijah’s attempt to seize the throne instead of Solomon. David survived Saul’s numerous attempts to kill him because of God’s grace. Although he suffered, God never gave up on him and showed King David His enduring presence, protection, and provision, and set him as an example of a good king in line with God’s heart.

[Also, David’s understanding and knowledge of God came from the Scripture.](#)

Many scholars believe that the motif of God as a Shepherd is rooted in Israel’s Exodus from Egypt and their 40 years of life in the wilderness. During the Exodus and wilderness life, they experienced God’s presence, protection, and provision. Let me show you some scriptures that highlight God’s presence, protection, and provision for Israel during their time in the wilderness:

[“The Lord went in front of them in a pillar of cloud by day, to lead them along the way, and in a pillar of fire by night, to give them light, so that they might travel by day and by night. Neither the pillar of cloud by day nor the pillar of fire by night left its place in front of the people.”](#) (Exodus 13:21-22 NRSVUE)

[“I have led you forty years in the wilderness. The clothes on your back have not worn out, and the sandals on your feet have not worn out; you have not eaten bread, and you have not drunk wine or strong drink—so that you may know that I am the Lord your God.”](#) (Deuteronomy 29:5-6 NRSVUE)

Additionally, God provided quail as a response to Israel's complaints. When it comes to manna, it was supplied every single day for forty years until they reached the border of Canaan (Exodus 16:35).

That is why Moses said, “**These forty years the Lord your God has been with you; you have lacked nothing.**” (Deuteronomy 2:7b NRSVUE). King David came to know God as his Shepherd as he read and meditated on the Scripture, especially about Israel's Exodus and life in the wilderness.

Accordingly, he left this will for his son, King Solomon: “**I am about to go the way of all the earth. Be strong, be courageous, and keep the charge of the Lord your God, walking in his ways and keeping his statutes, his commandments, his ordinances, and his testimonies, as it is written in the law of Moses, so that you may prosper in all that you do and wherever you turn. Then the Lord will establish his word that he spoke concerning me: ‘If your heirs take heed to their way, to walk before me in faithfulness with all their heart and with all their soul, there shall not fail you a successor on the throne of Israel.’**” (1 Kings 2:2-4 NRSVUE)

Your life needs the Bible as your guide and lamp to show you God's way - the way of life, ultimately leading to eternal life. Your life should be reflected in the Bible and constantly reoriented to the way of God, which is characterized by life, hope, and love. Through this, we can then confess that the Lord is my Shepherd who provides for me, protects me, and shows His enduring presence to me.

Let us read Psalm 23:2 together: “**He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside still waters**” (Psalm 23:2, NRSVUE). Here, the Hebrew word for “still” is “מְנוּחָה” (*menuha*), which means “**rest, resting place, quietness.**” Thus, the phrase “**still waters**” is literally “**waters of rest.**” Then the Psalm teaches, “**If the Lord is my Shepherd, He gives me rest.**”

**Now, let us reflect on the places described as “green pastures” and “still waters.” Where are they? Where is the place our Shepherd leads us so that we may enjoy this rest?**

To answer these questions, we must first understand the meaning of rest (*menuha*) in the Bible. We should never forget that there are four aspects of rest:

**First**, it means victory, security, and safety from enemies and dangers. We can find the word “*menuha*” that is used for the peace condition of Israel after winning wars against the neighboring nations (**Victory**). **Second**, “*menuha*” means the spiritual rest that comes from trusting and obeying God as well as the fulfillment of God's promises. So, it's rest from our faithful and obedient relationship with

God. If we are in an obedient relationship with God, our lives will be used to fulfill God's promises. Then *tat* becomes our peace (**Obedience**). **Third**, we have the ultimate "menuha" in Christ, which we will enjoy eternally before God's throne in His Kingdom (**Eternal Life**). **Finally**, "menuha" is closely tied to worship. When God completed His creation, on the seventh day he rested (Exod. 20:11, Psalm 95. *While Genesis uses a different verb (שָׁבַת), later theology (Exodus 20:11; Psalm 95) connects Sabbath rest with menuhāh as God's divine repose and rule.*) The Sabbath is a time of stopping work and remembering who God is through worship. It's time to remember a much larger community of God and His creation, rather than focusing on ourselves (**Worship**).

All four aspects of rest point to the same entity: God's presence. Winning war against enemies symbolizes God's presence with us. Rest, as a faithful and obedient relationship with God, means experiencing His presence in our lives. Through Christ, we will all stand in God's presence in His Kingdom. Worship is one of the means of grace where we can experience God's presence.

Where are "the green pastures" and "still waters"? They are in God's presence. Only in God's presence will we enjoy our ultimate and fundamental rest.

Both John Calvin and John Wesley agreed that Psalm 23:2 speaks about God's abundant and rich provisions for His people. However, Martin Luther emphasizes the complete dependence of the sheep on the shepherd for provision and protection. Luther connects the "green pastures" and "still waters" with the Gospel, suggesting that true nourishment and comfort come from God's presence and word.

That is why God says Israel's Exodus and their life in the wilderness are a journey to God Himself. "You have seen what I did to the Egyptians and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself." (Exodus 19:4 NRSVUE) "Truly my soul finds rest in God." (Psalm 62:1a)

If the Lord is my Shepherd, he gives me rest. To receive God's rest [menuha], we should go into His presence. We should seek God's presence as we study and understand God's Word, applying it to our lives. We must not compromise our time of worship with anything in the world, for it is in worship that we enjoy God's restful presence. Likewise, we should not lose sight of our eternal life, where we will experience our ultimate rest.

Jesus is calling us to enjoy his rest. Jesus is inviting us into His presence, where we find true rest for our lives. "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." (Matthew 11:28-30 NIV)