

He Restores My Soul

Psalm 23:1-6 (ESV)

Last Sunday, we took time to reflect on how King David came to understand God as his Shepherd. This understanding was shaped by his personal experiences with God. Despite the many ups and downs he faced throughout his life, David consistently encountered God's presence, protection, and provision.

We also learned that when the Lord is our Shepherd, He gives us rest. But where are the "green pastures" and "still waters" David speaks of? They are found in the very presence of God. As we continue on our spiritual journey, God is leading us closer to Himself, and in His presence, we discover true rest, *menuha*.

Please join me in reading today's Scripture on the screen:

"He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake." (Psalm 23:3 ESV)

First of all, if the Lord is my Shepherd, He restores my soul.

The Hebrew word for the verb "restore" is שׁוּב (shoov), which can also be translated as "turn back," "repair," or "refresh." The Hebrew word for "soul" is נֶפֶשׁ (nefesh), a word that encompasses not only the "soul" but also the "mind," "emotions," "desires," or "passions" - in essence, one's "whole being." As we turn back to God, every part of who we are - our thoughts, feelings, longings, and passions - can be repaired, refreshed, and fully restored. It is only in God's presence - and only as we return to Him - that we can function as He originally designed us to be.

"Turning back to God" involves more than internal reflection; it calls for the outward act of repentance - a deliberate change in direction. The Apostle Peter understood the deep connection between repentance and the refreshing of our souls. In his sermon, he proclaimed: **"Repent, therefore, and turn to God so that your sins may be wiped out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord and that he may send the Messiah appointed for you, that is, Jesus,"** (Acts 3:19-20 NRSVUE). After Peter's message, approximately five thousand people repented and turned back to God. So many were longing for renewal - for the restoration only God can bring.

Even now, people continue to search, yearn, and wait for God's healing and restorative touch. The good news? That restoration is still available, still powerful, and still found in the presence of the Lord. Yet, we must remember a vital truth:

without repentance, true healing, renewal, restoration, or refreshing is impossible, whether in our own souls or in our relationships with others. Let us read the following scripture together.

“If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.” (2 Chronicles 7:14 NIV)

What does this passage speak to us? It conveys a profound message of transformation through repentance. If our fathers and mothers repent of their sins, our homes will be healed and revived. If our leaders repent of their sins, our nation will be renewed and restored. If we repent of our sins, the places we live will experience God’s special refreshing power of healing, renewal, and restoration.

Secondly, if the Lord is my Shepherd, He leads me in paths of righteousness for His name's sake.

God always leads us to live a life of righteousness. But what is righteousness? The Hebrew word for righteousness is “**צְדָקָה** (*tzedek*), which also conveys meanings such as “**justice**” and “**right conduct**.” It is deeply connected to **God’s will, character, plan, and purpose**. In the New Testament, the concept of “righteousness” remains consistent with the Old Testament. The Greek word for “righteousness” is “**δικαιοσύνη** (*dikaioσύne*), which goes beyond **legal correctness** or **ritual obedience**. The biblical concept of righteousness centers on **relational faithfulness to God and His will in our hearts, words, and actions**. It reflects our holistic relationship with God, manifesting our ethical lives on Earth as a reflection of God's Kingdom.

“But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.” (Matthew 6:33 NRSVUE).

“When he had removed him, he made David their king. In his testimony about him he said, ‘I have found David, son of Jesse, to be a man after my heart, who will carry out all my wishes.’” (Acts 13:22 NRSVUE)

In a nutshell, whenever you encounter the word “righteousness” in the Bible, it should immediately bring to mind these interconnected ideas: God's heart toward us, our entire being (our thoughts, words, and actions) reflecting His heart, God's Kingdom, and our lives here on earth serving as a reflection of that Kingdom.

Thirdly, and most profoundly, if the Lord is my Shepherd, His leading inevitably brings me into His Kingdom, empowering and challenging me to reflect that Kingdom in my life for His name's sake.

What Does "For His Name's Sake" Truly Mean?

In the biblical context, a person's name profoundly reveals their identity, destiny, and mission. Therefore, when we speak of doing things "for His name's sake," it signifies that our ultimate calling is for the faithfulness, honor, glory of God's name itself. We are specifically called to reflect God's identity, embrace His destiny for us, and participate in His divine mission. Simply put, we are called for God's Kingdom as God leads us to His Kingdom.

The profound motivation behind God's restoration and guidance in our lives is not rooted in our merits or achievements. Instead, it is entirely grounded in the essence of His name. This powerful truth serves as a constant reminder that all the agendas and purposes of our lives must be God-centered, wholly aimed at revealing His faithfulness, manifesting His glory, and upholding His honor.

When we face moments of uncertainty or seek breakthroughs in our lives, we must first ask ourselves: *How does this honor God's name?* God's name must always remain at the center of our decisions and direction.

Jesus affirms this truth in Mark 13:13: **"And you will be hated by all for my name's sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved."** (Mark 13:13 ESV). This message appears throughout the Gospels in Matthew 10:22, Matthew 24:9, Luke 21:12, and Luke 21:19, underscoring the centrality of God's name in both our suffering and our endurance.

Let us consider how God led King David to His righteousness for His name's sake
Before David became King, he and his soldiers protected Nabal's shepherds and property in Maon, in the hill country of Judah. However, Nabal refused to share provisions for David and his soldiers and insulted David. **"Who is this David? Who is this son of Jesse? Many servants are breaking away from their masters these days. Why should I take my bread and water, and the meat I have slaughtered for my shearers, and give it to men coming from who knows where?"** (1 Samuel 25:10-11 NIV). David was so angry that he prepared to take revenge by attacking Nabal's household.

Nabal's wise and courageous wife, Abigail, quickly intervened. She gathered generous provisions and met David on the way, humbly pleading for mercy and taking responsibility for her husband's offense. She said, **"When the Lord has done all he promised and has made you leader of Israel, don't let this be a**

blemish on your record. Then your conscience won't have to bear the staggering burden of needless bloodshed and vengeance. And when the Lord has done these great things for you, please remember me, your servant!" (1 Samuel 25:30-31 NLT). Because of her intervention, David avoided unnecessary bloodshed and vengeance and received support from his own tribe, the tribe of Judah, to become King.

"The fool says in his heart, 'There is no God.' They are corrupt, their deeds are vile; there is no one who does good. The Lord looks down from heaven on all mankind to see if there are any who understand, any who seek God. All have turned away, all have become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one." (Psalm 14:1-3 NIV). The Hebrew word for "fool" here is "Nabal." Although Psalm 14 is not directly related to Nabal's story in 1 Samuel 25, David may have gained some insight into the sinful nature of humanity from the incident he experienced with Nabal. The Apostle Paul quotes this Psalm in Romans 3:10-12, stating that all humanity - Jew and Gentile alike - is under the power of sin and in need of God's righteousness through Christ.

After King David had an affair with Bathsheba, he ordered Joab to place her husband, Uriah the Hittite, on the frontline of a war so that he might be killed. David's plan was successful. However, God sent Nathan to David ("The Lord sent Nathan to David." 1 Samuel 12:1 NIV). Nathan confronted David and told him a parable about a rich man stealing a poor man's lamb, which led David to unknowingly condemn himself. Nathan then boldly declared, "You are the man!" (2 Samuel 12:7 NIV), revealing David's sin and delivering God's judgment. Psalm 51 was written by King David after he was confronted by the Prophet Nathan. "Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions. Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions... Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me." (Psalm 51:1, 10-12 NIV).

How can we discern God's directions and guidance? We can discern God's will through the Bible, prayer, the church, the people around us, and the circumstances that unfold in our lives. However, before all of that, we must have a repentant heart before God to experience His restoration and to discern His guidance toward His righteousness, so that His Kingdom may be revealed in our lives.