

Psalms for Every Season: The 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm

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Psalm 23

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Reflection & Discussion

**Psalm 23 is one of the most popular and seems to be in the happy, positive song category**

The writer actually seems to be framing deep thoughts about the maturity of faith in following God.

\*What is your experience or understanding of the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm?

\*Why do you think it is so popular and persuasive?

**Immediately this Psalm sets up how we live as people dependent on God**

Read and discuss Psalm 23:1-3 (NRSV)

<sup>1</sup> *The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.*

<sup>2</sup> *He makes me lie down in green pastures;*

*he leads me beside still waters;*

<sup>3</sup> *he restores my soul.*

*He leads me in right paths*

*for his name's sake*

\*What do you notice about the metaphors used in this passage? How might our western understanding lead us to think incorrectly about these verses?

\*Has your faith journey caused you to look at needs/wants differently? How?

\*In what ways has God been a shepherd to you?

**God does not always keep us out of the dark valleys**

Read and discuss Psalm 23:4 (NRSV)

<sup>4</sup> *Even though I walk through the darkest valley,*

*I fear no evil,*

*for you are with me;*

*your rod and your staff,*

*they comfort me.*

\*What does this verse tell us about our hard times and dark valleys? What valley have you experienced recently?

\*When have you experienced God's presence with you in the midst of one of these times? How has God's presence felt like rain in the desert?

**Psalm 23 closes with a praise and assurance of who God is to the writer and to us**

Read and discuss Psalm 23:5-6 (NRSV)

<sup>5</sup> *You prepare a table before me*

*in the presence of my enemies;*

*you anoint my head with oil;*

*my cup overflows.*

<sup>6</sup> *Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me*

*all the days of my life,*

*and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord*

*my whole life long.*

- \*What does the psalmist say about the expectations for the future? What comfort comes from this passage?
- \*What experience of a richer or fuller life do you have as you have stayed close to the Shepherd? Or if you haven't experienced this yet, do these verses encourage you in some way?
- \*How do you remind yourself of God's presence throughout your day?
- \*What is the Spirit saying to you through Psalm 23 about your current season of life? What invitation from the Shepherd do you sense?

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