Summary

This sermon walks through Psalm 23 as a cure for discouragement, using the story of Elijah in 1 Kings 18-19 as a relatable starting point. Just as Elijah went from witnessing God's miraculous fire to lying under a bush in despair, we often find ourselves running on empty even after experiencing God's goodness. The pastor reminds us that God did not rebuke Elijah in His low moment but instead met Him with rest, food, and direction. The central question of the message is this: when life gets hard, are we moving closer to our shepherd or pulling away? Moving through each verse of Psalm 23, the sermon highlights the names of God revealed in action: Jehovah Jireh (our provider), Jehovah Shalom (our peace), Jehovah Rapha (our restorer), Jehovah Shammah (the God who is present), Jehovah Nissi (our banner and victory), and El Shaddai (the God who is more than enough). Each name speaks directly against the lies of discouragement. The pastor challenges listeners to stay close to the shepherd through prayer, Scripture, and Christian community, because goodness and mercy are not just occasional blessings but a constant pursuit that follows us all the days of our lives.

Intro Prayer

Heavenly Father, we come to You today grateful that You are our shepherd. Before we dive into this discussion, we ask that You quiet the noise in our hearts and minds. Open our eyes to what You specifically want each of us to receive today. Where there is discouragement, bring hope. Where there is distance, draw us close. Holy Spirit, lead this conversation and let Your truth be the loudest voice in the room. In Jesus' name, amen.

Ice Breaker

What is one thing that always seems to recharge you when you are feeling worn out or drained, whether it is a place, an activity, or a person?

Key Verses

- Psalm 23:1-6
- 1 Kings 19:4
- John 10:27

- Isaiah 61:10
- Psalm 37:25
- Psalm 16:11
- Proverbs 3:5-6

Questions

- Elijah had just witnessed one of the greatest miracles in the Bible and then fell into deep discouragement shortly after. Have you ever experienced a spiritual high followed by a sudden crash? What did that feel like?
- The pastor asked a key question: when life gets hard, are you moving closer to your shepherd or pulling away? Which direction do you tend to drift, and why do you think that is?
- Psalm 23:1 says, 'The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want' (ESV). The word 'want' here means to lack or fail. How does staying close to God practically help us feel less like we are lacking, even when our circumstances have not changed?
- The sermon described how sheep only lie down when they feel completely safe, connecting this to Jehovah Shalom, the God of peace. What are some things that rob you of peace, and what does it look like for you to actively pursue God's peace in those moments?
- Psalm 23:3 says, 'He restores my soul' (ESV). The pastor pointed out that restoration means to turn back or return. Is there an area of your life where you sense God is inviting you to return to Him or to the joy you once had?
- The pastor said that discouragement wants to stop and build a house in the dark valley, but we need to keep walking. What are some practical ways a person can keep moving forward spiritually when everything feels dark or overwhelming?
- Psalm 23:5 describes God preparing a table in the presence of our enemies. What does it mean to you personally that God not only blesses you but does so in a way that declares His victory over what has been working against you?
- Verse 6 says that goodness and mercy shall follow us all the days of our lives, including our struggle days and our discouraged days. How does this truth change the way you view your hardest seasons?

Life Application

This week, choose one verse from Psalm 23 that speaks most directly to where you are right now. Write it down somewhere you will see it daily, such as your phone lock screen, a sticky note on your mirror, or a

journal. Each morning, read it out loud and take a moment to thank God for the specific attribute of His character it reveals. If you have been pulling away from God or from Christian community during a hard season, take one concrete step this week to close that gap, whether that means reaching out to someone in your group, spending extra time in prayer, or simply showing up.

Key Takeaways

- Discouragement is not a sign of weak faith. Even Elijah, a mighty prophet, fell into despair after a great victory. God's response was not rebuke but compassion, rest, and direction.
- The answer to discouragement is not to run away from God but to stay close to the shepherd. Distance from God deepens discouragement, while nearness to Him brings restoration and peace.
- Psalm 23 reveals God's character through His covenant names: Jehovah Jireh provides, Jehovah Shalom brings peace, Jehovah Rapha restores, Jehovah Shammah is always present, and Jehovah Nissi fights on our behalf.
- We are clothed in Christ's robe of righteousness through covenant relationship with God. This identity does not change based on our circumstances or feelings, and it is the foundation of our confidence.
- Goodness and mercy pursue us on every kind of day, not just our best days. The shepherd's love is steadfast and follows us through faith-filled seasons and discouraged ones alike.

Ending Prayer

Lord, thank You for being a shepherd who never abandons His sheep. Thank You that You meet us in our lowest moments, just as You met Elijah, not with condemnation but with care. As we leave this time together, we ask that You restore any soul in this room that has been running on empty. Remind us that Your goodness and mercy are following us today, tomorrow, and every day after. Help us to stay close to You, to lean into Your presence, and to trust that even in the dark valleys, You are holding our hand. May we walk out of here with renewed joy, knowing that we are clothed in Your righteousness and that You are more than enough. In Jesus' name, amen.