

When He Becomes You

Psalm 23 | Part 22, Psalms Series | Hope City Church

CENTRAL QUESTION

Do you know the Shepherd, or do you just know things that are true about him?

I. Verses 1-3: True, But Untested

Key Text: *Psalm 23:1-3*

The Hebrew word behind “restores” in verse 3 is *shuv*, the same word used for repentance. It doesn’t just mean refreshment. It means God brings the soul back into right standing.

- “Shepherd” wasn’t only a term for tending animals. In David’s time it was also royal language. David, Israel’s own shepherd-king, is submitting himself to a greater Shepherd.
- Verses 2-3 talk about God in the third person. He does this. He does that.
- Everything said here is true. But it’s untested. It’s faith describing God, not faith speaking to God.
- The reason God does these things is for his own name’s sake, not because of anything David has done.

II. Verse 4: The Valley, Where He Becomes You

Key Text: *Psalm 23:4*

- The language shifts here from “he” to “you.” God moves from being talked about to being talked to.
- A shepherd’s rod and staff were two different tools. The rod was for defense and discipline. The staff, with its hook, was for pulling a sheep back from danger or wandering.
- This isn’t a coffee mug verse. David wrote it as a man who was hunted, first by Saul and later by his own son.
- Faith that has only been described becomes faith that has been tested. That’s the difference between talking about God and talking to him.

III. Verse 5: You Prepare a Table

Key Text: *Psalm 23:5*

- “You” continues through the rest of the psalm. The relationship established in the valley carries forward.
- God doesn’t remove the enemies. He sets a table in their presence and gives peace even while danger is still there.
- Anointing with oil was how an honored guest was welcomed. God isn’t just providing for David. He’s honoring him.
- David didn’t earn this table. Scripture is honest about his failures, including a conspiracy to have a man killed. The table is set because of who God is, not because of David’s record.

IV. Verse 6: Surely

Key Text: Psalm 23:6

- “Surely” isn’t wishful thinking. It’s David’s conclusion, drawn from watching God’s faithfulness over time.
- Goodness and mercy following “all the days” is confidence built on a track record, not naive optimism.
- The psalm points forward to Psalm 24, where David asks, “Who is this King of glory?” The same Shepherd who cared for David personally in Psalm 23 is the King of glory in Psalm 24.

Closing Challenge

The quickest way through the valley is staying close to the Shepherd. It’s easy to get lost or devoured in the valley on your own. Let the valley prove your faith, not push you away from him.

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

1. Are the things you say about God things you’ve actually tested, or are they still just true in theory for you?
2. Think of a valley you’ve walked through. Did it move you closer to God, or further away?
3. Where in your life do you need to shift from talking about God to talking to him?
4. Where have you seen God’s rod (protection, correction) or his staff (rescue, guidance) at work in your life?
5. If you’re in a valley right now, what would it look like to stay close to the Shepherd instead of trying to get through it on your own?

Scripture References: Psalm 23:1-6 | Psalm 22 | Psalm 24:1