3994 Victoria Avenue Vineland, Ontario L0R 2C0

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Psalms 23!

Overview

Glory to God. Hallelujah. Shout to the Lord, all ye saints of the Lord. Give him praise. Give him honor. Give him glory. Hallelujah. Praise you Lord. Praise you Lord. Praise you Lord. Praise you Lord. Hallelujah.

Hallelujah. Hallelujah. Please be comfortably seated. Praise God. Hallelujah. Hallelujah. Hallelujah. It's so sick. It's so good to see you. These people come in when all is well from Brantford. I'm so- I'm- Thank you. You honor all of us.

We're going to start publishing, come to Vineland Church, the difference is worth the drive. God bless you all. Who has never heard of the 23rd Psalm? It's known as the pearl of the Old Testament. It's probably the most honored, the most favored, the most appreciated Psalm of all the Psalms. And with good reason. It's so interesting that it's right in the middle Psalm 23. It's right in the middle between Psalm 22 and Psalm 24. Somebody thinks that's funny.

That's okay. Psalm 22 is the Redeemer suffering for the sins of humanity. Psalm 23 is the Redeemer post-resurrection, walking among his people, supplying their every need. Psalm 24 is the Redeemer, King of Kings, Lord of Lords forever, forever, forever. It's called a trilogy. That's my take on it. This is a trilogy, three chapters in a row. I love the concept of Psalm 22 is what the Redeemer experienced historically. Psalm 23 is not a historical Psalm. It's talking about what the Redeemer is doing for you and for I today. He's leading us. Psalm 24 is the future. It's where we're going. It's the be all and it's the end all. But it's important to see this for the Jewish people.

I'm going to say a very broad statement here because it's not true of all of them, I'm sure, but the Jewish people are hesitant to use the terminology with me. They prefer we. They speak of God's approval based on their bloodline from Adam, from Abraham. They do not recognize, they do not focus and drill down in on the fact that yes, the Lord chose Abraham and yes, these are the chosen people. But again, that word, the people, is very broad. It's important for everyone, especially the Jewish people, but it's important for you and I that when we read the 23rd Psalm, it doesn't say the Lord is our shepherd. I love this. The Psalmist recognized that he said, he's my shepherd and that does not eliminate everybody else. But it's the Psalmist saying, he loves me and he cares about me. He's my shepherd, my shepherd.

So that means that in Psalm 22 to follow through with what I'm presenting to you today, Psalm 22 is about me in my sin and how for me he died and resurrected again from the grave. And Psalm 23 is about me having been redeemed from my sin, having been set free.

I'm a child of God, his fingerprints are all over me. And Psalm 24 is about how I'm going to enjoy eternity with him, along with my family and hopefully along with all of you. So I like to take a Psalm, say like 23, and I could have, and maybe I still will say, say, when we go on the internet, we always post, we post a message. We don't post our singing, but we post a message.

And then we always give it a title. And I think I want to call this today experiencing the 23rd Psalm. I know you read it. I know you read it. I'm going to say something contrary to something that's very popular. What I'm about to share with you this morning goes almost diametrically opposite to the concept of I read my Bible through every year, once again. I read it from cover to cover once a year. I've done that just like you have, but I find myself getting into the routine, you know, every morning you turn on the coffee, then you heat up your porridge and then you do this and then you do that and you wash your face and you go and face the world.

For me to read through the book from cover to cover, it seems to me that I'm not enjoying the journey. I'm trying to arrive at the conclusion. I did it and I started January 1 and I started all over again. So when you read like that, you are not taking the time to pitch your tent on one verse or even one chapter because you have to keep on moving on and you're keeping track, aren't you? You use your pen, you mark it off, mark it off. I'm not making fun of that. I've done it myself many, many times, but I find that I'm rushing through and I don't get to, I call it drill down. So I want to drill down on Psalm 23 with you this morning. I spoke once in my home church in Hamilton Bethel Church. That was my home church. My folks attended that church and the pastor was very kind and he invited me to speak on a Wednesday night.

So that's the first time I spoke publicly. I remember my mouth was so dry, I was scared to death. The pastor, his name was Hillston, invited me into his little office before the service began. He said, how are you doing? David, I said, sir, I'm scared to death. He said, oh good. He said, don't ever lose that. Did you know I'm nervous every Sunday that I come up here? Because this is such an awesome responsibility, it's an incredible privilege. Don't take advantage of it and don't take it lightly, David. Do you know the opportunity that you have right now? And so that day I did my best. And as I was attending Bible college then for three years, I noticed what the teachers would teach, of course. I didn't just notice what they said, but I noticed how they said it.

I found some of my teachers boring. And I wondered why. Then there were guests, preachers would come and at times they'd ring my bell and I'd say, yes. And there were others that just kind of left me. And in my heart of hearts, I always wanted to be the guy that rang the bell. Now that's all that I would get applause or praise, nothing like that. It's back to the responsibility you're called for a purpose. I remember getting ready for my turn. Everybody in the third year, that's your last year, it was only a three year program back then. And every person who wanted to graduate with a diploma had to speak to the whole student body. Chapel would be packed to capacity. All the staff were there. And it was my turn coming. I'll never forget one of my favorite friends at the college.

They've just retired from full time leadership in Zambia, John and Ruth Kerr. Never forget standing looking at the list of chapel services and so on. And John came up behind me and you put his finger up and he kind of hit the bulletin board with a bit of a thud.

And he said, there you go, big Dave.

Next week you're on. And I put my pants near Pete. I was so scared. And we were taught, write your sermon out, write it out so you don't forget. Make sure you get all the pieces in place. And so I did that. And then I threw that in the garbage. Not because it wasn't something valuable, but I didn't feel it in here. I was trying to make up a sermon. And people hear sermons all the time.

I wanted to preach a message, not a sermon. I wanted to be a vehicle of the Lord's voice. I wanted to be a channel of blessing somehow. So nervous. I spent most of the night before the chapel service in the chapel, laying on the floor, crying my guts out, scared to death. Not that my audience would not approve. They weren't going to approve. I was too much of an idiot in college. My third year, they almost threw me out because I just wasn't an idiot. I really was.

They had a vote on it. And it was only one professor who said, no, keep them. We've had idiots like this before and they turned out good. And that's the only reason I got to even stay in. So even the student body was critical of me. And so I wasn't worried about whether they would find my message acceptable. And I really wasn't worried about the staff. I was worried about the responsibility. These were not students sitting in front of me who would indeed be critical of.

He didn't start right. No, he didn't do right. I didn't care about that. I felt they were not students. They were souls. And this was an opportunity to give them the bread of life. And I'll never forget sometime in the middle of that night. God touched me and moved me with a verse, one verse. It came out of Pilate's mouth, behold the man. And I went into the pulpit on that morning in the chapel, still scared. But there was something in me like a fire. And when I stepped up to that pulpit, I preached, behold the man. I preached like a whirlwind and I never had a note before me because it was in here and it was gripping my heart. And the place went into tears. God did something special. And as I walked away from that chapel that day, I wasn't heady.

I wasn't all wound up like this, but I thought I've discovered something that God, I never want to lose that. I don't want to preach off of a script. I know this to be a fact. Most of the preachers in Canada this morning are preaching sermons that they got off the internet. You can buy, I can buy sermons. They're actually cheap. It doesn't cost a lot. You can buy a sermon and it'll have four perfect points. And, oh, by the way, for an extra $10, they'll give you the slides that you can show and they're professional.

Not me. David, are you on a break this morning? No, I'm trying to lead you down a path, not about my preaching, not about my experience, but about a verse, a concept of thought, the grips you, it'll change your life. I want to read the 23rd Psalm and I'd like to read it in very slow motion, but you're going to want to have lunch sometime before 3 o'clock. I want you to do this with me. Just try something with me, okay? You don't have to. I'm not going to look to see who's cooperating, who's not.

This is for you. Close your eyes. And as I read this, as I read this, let it internalize. When I read this, are you seeing something in your mind? Are you seeing something?

The Lord is my shepherd. I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul. He leads me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Yay, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil. For you are with me. You're rod and your staff. Oh, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. And you anoint my head with oil. Oh, my cup runs over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life.

And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. I was pastor at a church in Toronto, 1980s. It's called Crossroads Cathedral. Betty Voth, Ernie Voth. You were there. And something sort of unique started happening. There were no ladies that I noticed, but there were men showing up at the service. And they were always very, I shouldn't say properly dressed. We all wore ties in those days. Sorry. Sorry. People never noticed me till a few weeks ago.

I started wearing a tie and now everybody's like, oh, nice. Oh, nice. I'm saying, oh, thank you. Thank you, April. She dresses me. But these men were sitting in the services and they were always dressed in a suit and a tie. And I thought, Mormons. Nope, they weren't. I also noticed a couple of times that they had notepads with them. And as I'm preaching, they're taking notes. Now, this is weird.

This is a test. This is the mafia. So on one Sunday, a fellow came up. One of these guys came up and shook my hand and we talked for a few moments and he said, I want to ask you a question. Where did you go to school? And then he asked this question. Where did you learn to do it? It. What is it? When you preach, when you preach, there's something unique going on. Who taught you how to do that?

I said, why are you asking? Well, I attend Toronto, so that might not be right. I thought it was called the Toronto Seminary. Maybe it was a seminary. And he said, everybody in the class, he said, we're learning about style of preaching, means, techniques. And he said, we were told that there are categories, certain preachers, teachers, oracles, people who speak, they fall in categories. And we are to go to churches in the city of Toronto and visit those of a specific category and determine, well, what kind of preacher do you want to be? And he said, everybody from my class will be visiting these services. And I said, I've never heard of such a thing. My head wasn't exploding because he said, well, everybody is in a category, so you're in one of the categories. It wasn't saying anything special about me.

And I said, so tell me about me. I'm intrigued. He said, we were told that when a preacher preaches like you do, the people see things in their minds. And at times they experience things. When you're saying something happy, they'll feel happy. When you say something frightening, sometimes people will feel frightened. I said, that sounds like manipulation. He said, no, no, no, that's not it. He said, it has some pieces of it that might kind of look like manipulation. But he said, it's not, it's not. And then I remembered that day in Bible college when God did something so stirring in my heart, when I got to the conclusion, people were weeping.

I thought, yes. God's doing so. He said, where did you learn to do that? I said, I didn't learn it, sir. Well, you got it from somewhere. I said, I got it, I guess I got it in my jeans. Were there preaches in your family? Well, I said, my father's brother, but I never even knew him. That was so interesting. And then years later, I'm preaching in a church out in central Alberta. God's doing some wonderful things. And new people were coming in and a couple of doctors started attending our church.

And one of them had, he was a specialist. And he wanted to visit with me. I would go to his home when we talked. And he said, I've never heard a preacher like you before. Blah, blah, blah. And I thought, well, that's okay. We should all be different. And then he showed up one day at my office and he handed me a book. He said, this book is all about preachers and how they preach. And he said, read chapter four. It's really all about you. So I did start to read that.

What are you telling us all this about for today? Because you can experience a unique experience. If you take the time to waste the most valuable thing that you own, you know, is your time. That's the most valuable commodity that you have. And that woman who came and opened up that precious jar of ointment, she wasted it on the feet of Jesus. If you'll take time to waste that precious commodity on him by letting him talk to you out of here, it'll change your life. I want to suggest to you that when you read the Psalm 23, you need to read it slowly. So now I have, after all these years, discovered a word called retrography. Retro-graphy. I think it comes from the word retina. R-E-T. Ret-graphy.

Ret-na. Because retrography describes what people feel, what people experience when they focus and they listen closely to something that really intrigues them. Ret-graphy is simply a description of apparently what people experience when my kind of preacher speaks. At times, not always. In their mind, they see things in their emotions, they experience things. And as I look at the 23rd Psalm, the Psalmist wrote the 23rd Psalm looking and believing that when you, a believer, read it, you will see things, you will experience things, and it will change your life. When I read the 23rd Psalm and I take my time, I have graphic images that happen to me. If I'm reading quickly to get the, I got to read 23, then 24 or 25. If I do that, I miss it all. But if I slow down and I read Psalm 23, I can almost smell the grass that the sheep lays down in. I want to discover a little pool of water, a little creek where I can lay down on my belly and drink out of it just like a sheep would. I can almost hear the sound of the shepherd who leads his sheep with his voice.

How do you know so much about shepherds? I know the chief shepherd who said, my sheep, no, my voice, and they follow me. I'm a sheep. I need to hear his voice so I can follow him. And when I take my time and allow this to drill down and get into my spirit, I hear his voice. And his voice beckons me, follow me, David, follow me. I've never gotten good at it. It's not something that comes second hand or easy hand. It's not a simple thing and it doesn't happen every time I read. I don't want to make more of this than I should be. But if you learn to spend time in a passage and let soak in it, it will revolutionize your spiritual walk. My shepherd, he's my shepherd.

This psalmist divided into three portions, two legitimately, but I think I see a third.
The first few verses take place in a locality. And then the next couple of verses,
the locality changes. So let's read this again.

The Lord is my shepherd. I shall not want. That is the intentional banner. Everything after the Lord is my shepherd, I'll never want for anything. The rest of the psalm is embellishing that statement. He's my shepherd and I don't want. I'm looked after. Then he goes on, he makes me lie down.

So in the first few verses, I am a sheep. He makes me lie down in green pastures. Not a desert, not on a pile of rocks. It's not like a beach where there's no sand and there's all these ugly rocks that are sticking in your back and you have to go and look somewhere else. No, it's lush. And in the Middle East, where this story was birthed, green pastures are not everywhere. Your lawns are greening up. And if it's not your lawn, you're looking at your neighbor. He's greening up. Why does this sheep talk about? He makes me lie down in green pastures. Green pastures are a luxury.

And without the shepherd, the sheep will never find the green pastures because, well, I remember traveling in, it doesn't matter. It was either India or Kenyan and whoever it was to my host, we saw about a thousand sheep goats up. Sheep goats, I don't know what they were crossing the road in front of us. And I said, look at all of these animals. Where are they going? He said, the shepherd has got to take them to a place where they can find something to eat. Well, that sort of didn't make sense to me. Why did he have to take them somewhere where they can get something to eat? What were they doing yesterday? And the answer came, they eat down what's there. And they have to move on to another. And the shepherd knows where to take them.

He leads them to green pastures. Quickly we just jump a couple of verses. He restores my soul. Do you know what happens in a green pasture? You eat to your heart's content and then you lay down. They say there's restoration just in sleeping. Without sleep, you're in big trouble. That's why you need to get adequate sleep because when you're asleep, there's a restoration process that takes place in you. Your body gets renewed. Apparently there's a lot of junk in your brain that's moved out. Stuff that really shouldn't be there. Not talking about bad reading, bad anything.

No, I don't know. It just says the clutter in your brain is cleared out. And in the morning you've got his fresh brain. He makes me lie down. The implication is there. The shepherd just sits there and hums away. Well, we eat the grass and then we lay down. Then he kind of tones his voice down. And he sits there while our souls are restored. Your soul needs restoration. Your soul is your mind. He remotions in your will.

Your mind's getting very cluttered these days with the news. We could have a lot of fun with that one right now, couldn't we? Chile Concarnia is going to ruin your life and Trump is going to mess you up before Concarnia can get at it. And Pfizer is putting out an advertisement right now. Have you heard it on the radio? You need to get another COVID shot. If you're 60 years of age or older, you're going to get COVID. I heard that about five times. And at the end it says, this lovely message presented to you by Pfizer. Ching, ching, ching. What does all of this rubble do to your mind? It troubles you.

They say everybody in Canada right now is nervous. Our minds are occupied with negativity. You know what that does to you? That changes the composition of a remotion. You can't be happy. I used to like the word gay. We used to have a gay old time, us kids. Now we're not allowed. Okay, no. We used to have a great time when we were young. We're having trouble having a great time now. Why?

Our emotions are disturbed. Why? Mind, emotion, will. That's your soul. It's a three compartment thing. Your mind really controls your emotions and your emotions have much to do with your will. So when you're disturbed about bad news, when you're troubled with even family problems, when you're troubled with finances, if you had RRSPs on the go, how's your RRSP today? Like everything is going down. And people who had put money aside and thought they're going to be fine.

Now they're wondering how long is Trump going to beat us all up? And we're all going down. We're all going down the ship. And there are seniors who are worried about how I am going to make it. Did I save enough? That is mental garbage that just troubles you. And that makes you emotionally unstable. And then that troubles your will. Your soul, mind, emotions will need restoration. And what I found with Jesus, the good shepherd as I lay on the grass, my soul got restored. I love songs when I come into the house of the Lord that say, come and let us go onto the mountain of the Lord, onto the house of our God.

I like to sing happy songs because it feeds my soul. And if my soul's troubled, my spirit is locked in and I can't worship. So I always start my prayer time with the Lord celebrating what he's done. What am I doing? I'm pumping air into the tires of my soul. The psalmist said, come on, soul. Why are you so unhappy? Why are you cast out? Come on, come on, soul. Think some good thoughts. Get control of your soul. When I read the 23rd Psalm and I pause, when I read it, I hear a babbling brook sometime,

a little stream going by. I hear something beautiful. You know what's beautiful about sheep? They haven't got a care in the world. Did you know that? They'll walk off the cliff. And the sheep right behind them says, that guy's having bad luck. And the sheep beside them says, yeah, and I bet the ambulance will be late coming too. Sheep don't care because they haven't got a care in the world. I need to be one of them every once in a while. I have a little jingle. You've been around me very much.

You've heard this. Jimmy Crack corn, and I don't care. If so and so wins this election, we're in for this. If so and so wins the election, we're in for that. You know what? I do care. But if I'm going to care, go to sleep. I'm going to have a rough night. Now I lay me down this late. I pray the Lord my soul to keep. I don't pay the rest of it if I should die before I wake. No. And then as I'm drifting off, hopefully I say, Jimmy Crack corn and I don't care. That can be a careless sheep. When I walk with him, when I'm used to hearing his voice, it's a scary thing to live without hearing his voice, honey. That's a frightful thing. A married couple would not get along in the home without conversation. Dialogue. It's called a relationship. In order my relationship with him in Psalm 23,

my relationship is reestablished. And he walks with me and he talks with me, and he tells me I am his own. And the joy we share as we tarry there, none other has ever known. Our souls need restoration. In order to be restored, we need to have a relationship. Don't waste your time praying that you're going to hear the voice of God or see writing on the wall. His voice and the writing is right here. It's all here. It's all here. Is he leading me? Is he leading you? Lord, my shepherd, I shall not want, he makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me. We go for a little stroll by still waters. He restores my soul. Then I come to our crossroads. I've got a decision to make.

It says, he leads me in the paths. Which paths? Broadest the way. No. Many are the ways, but the truth is narrow. Quote it properly, formulary. Broad is the way that leads to destruction. Leave there be which is into us. But straight as the day that narrows the way that leads us to life, and new there be that's minded. What a team. What a team.

Don't leave me, don't leave me, Larry. There's a crossroads that happens here. The psalmist is being honest. The psalmist gets into a place where they're confused. I had John and Laurie Dartona with me one night, relatives of Peter and Allie. They were with me. In Kenya, I had just brought them out of Uganda in my vehicle. It was too late in the day. We got stymied at the border from Uganda to Kenya. We couldn't get through quickly. They kept me there for hours.

Now it's getting late. We dare not drive in the night now down to Nairobi. There's going to be giraffes on the road. There's going to be zebras. There's going to be wildebeasts. People die just driving at night. We've got to find a place to stay. But here we are all in the middle now of Kenya. I said, I know where there's a place. Two ladies have a missionary compound. And John says, where is it? I said, I know it's a little west of where we are right now.

And I turned off the road. And we're going along this wacky cow path. He said, is this the right road? I said, I think we'll know soon enough. And then we came into a divide in the road. We had to go left or right. I said to John, do we go left or right? He says, you're asking the wrong guy. It was a moment of decision. By the way, I turned right. And by the way, in the middle of the night, I found the house of Iris. And we stayed there.

But there come times when you don't know which way to go, you want to go in the path of righteousness and the shepherd will lead you. And he'll show you which is the right way. You'll hear a voice behind you, Old Testament verse. You'll hear a voice behind you that says, this is the way. Walk this way. There's a verse. Now I walk through the valley of the shadow of death. I fear no evil. It just changed. The sentiment changed. It was a happy place, beside the still waters and the pasture and all the rest.

All of a sudden, it gets rough. I'm walking through the valley of the shadow of death. There's evil there, but I'm not afraid because you're with me. You're rotting. Your staff, they comfort me. Now we've moved from being in the green pastures, the meadow. We've moved away from the pool of water. We've ascended up out of the valley of shadows and of death. And we're at a new location. It's distinct locations. Now the location is where you prepare a table before me. Thousands are up in the hills.

They've got thousands of people. Thousands are up in the hills. They've got spears. They've been sharpening your swords. And I say, Lord, they're going to kill me. Did you see that, Lord? I'm surrounded. I'm surrounded. David, I saw that. What are we going to do? And he says, I had my angels prepare a lovely banquet. What do you like?

Chicken, beef. It's all there. Maybe you want to start with a salad. They're going to kill me. Sit down, David. I prepared a meal. Let you and I be friends. Let's enjoy a minute. You've prepared a table. And you've said it before me. In the presence of my enemies, there's a little bit of humor there. These guys want to kill me.

And they can't touch me because I'm eating Colonel Sanders. And you can't touch me while I'm doing that. I don't fear them because I'm with you and you prepare a table for it. Oh, my cup runs over. This just goes on forever. And then the location changes one more time. Goodness and mercy. I'm going to follow me all the days of my life. And when will my life end? Never. Because the location of this sheep from the meadow and the pool of water and the intersection go left or go right, ending up in a valley.

The valley of the shadow of death. Stay close to the leader. Stay close. Stay close. And it ends up. I'm living in the house of the Lord forever. In my father's house, there are many rooms. I will dwell in his house forever in my father's house and go in there to prepare a place for you. How come we haven't gone yet? Because it's still under construction. Jane is going to be so awesome.

It might take another 10 years for it to get finished. I mean the decorating. This lady is a decorator. You've got to see your house. There's one wall in particular I love. It's very special. It's a wall. People know how to decorate. And the Lord is decorating a room for you. There's people going to come and serve us now communion because my time is more than gone. We're going to say goodbye as the servers come.

You just come. And I'm each of them. And while the servers are coming. I'm going to say goodbye to the people on the Internet who've been watching us. And whatever your name is, wherever you come from, we want you to know that we consider you to be a part of our family. And if we know who you are, we pray for you and we care about you. So the Lord bless you and keep you, cause his face to shine upon you. May he sense he's with you and you're rising up and you're going down. May he always give you the sense of his presence. I encourage you to learn to read the 23rd Psalm and get it for yourself. Amen.