

Introduction:

**“Our God”
Psalm 23**

Happy Anniversary RHC! This has been a year like no other. It has been strange. It has been hard. It has been trying, but through it all...

Our God has been good! Say that with me: Our God has been good. (2x)

Check out this video with several of our RHC Members sharing about how they have been blessed through RHC in 2020.

VIDEO

**“Our God”
Psalm 23**

Isn't that awesome?! Thank you for caring for one another. Thank you for praying for one another. Thank you for showing up, for investing in every generation in our church family, for staying connected!

We have so much to celebrate. Why? Because Our God has been good, because our God is good!

Today, I want to invite us to...

The Point: Celebrate the grace and goodness of God to Redemption Hill in 2020.

To do so, we're going to turn our hearts to a very familiar psalm to many, Psalm 23. You can go ahead and find Psalm 23, and as you do, I want to invite out a very special person in my life - our 9 year old daughter, Kesed, who is also one of our amazing Redemption Kids here at RHC, and she is going to read this chapter for us.

Psalm 23 (text displayed)

Awesome job! This morning I want us to celebrate God's goodness by highlighting 5 ways he cares for us as his people.

1. Our God provides (23:1-2).

Personal

King David, the writer of this psalm, was once a shepherd. He knew how to care for sheep, and as he experienced God's personal and intimate care for him, it led him to say: not "The Lord is shepherd," but "The Lord is MY shepherd. I shall not want. He makes *me*.. He leads *me*. He restores *my* soul."

God wants us to experience and enjoy him at the deepest and most intimate levels.

He begins by saying: because God is MY shepherd, "I shall not want."

- "Want" does not refer to desiring something but lacking something needed.
- One of the chief responsibilities of a shepherd was to provide for the needs of the sheep.

God's provision is seen in the next two statements of verse 2.

He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters

- Green pastures: God satisfies our HUNGER and need of REST.
- Still waters: God satisfies our THIRST.
- Our every physical and spiritual need is found in unlimited resources of God.
- Psalm 34:9 says, "Oh, fear the Lord, you his saints, for those who fear him have no lack!"
- 2 Peter 1:3 tells us: "His divine power has given us everything..."

Jesus, who self-identified as The Good Shepherd in the Gospel of John, said in John 6:35: "I am the bread of life, whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst."

Jesus has hooked us up, physically and spiritually! [[With more than an app and what's coming at the after party DRIVE THROUGH! :)]] He satisfies us like no other!

RHC Celebrates

- In spite of 2020's uncertainties, we've seen God provide again and again.
- He's carried people through job loss & furloughs. He's provided for our church's needs, and provided through one another. Our Benevolence fund, which took in around \$15k!, is meeting tangible needs.
- We've seen God answer prayer by providing our new worship leader, Pedro Caciano.
- We've seen God provide spiritual support through the many check-in calls, messages, and times of prayer. Who remembers the daily prayer calls during the first 2 months of the pandemic when we were just learning how to ZOOM? :)

T: Our God provides! And...

2. Our God restores (23:3).

Read v. 3

"He restores my soul."

- God's restoring touch brings a renewed sense of strength and vitality to our lives. When you see the word "soul" here, think your entire inner being (mind, will, and emotions).
- God cares about you to the depths of you.
- When we are weary and weak, when we feel broken, like we can't go on, God is wants to bring us back to the place of wholeness and flourishing.
- One of the verses that grabbed my heart in our 1 Peter Series and keeps finding its way into my prayers is 1 Peter 5:10 - "And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore (Who needs to hear that again?!), confirm, strengthen, and establish you."

RHC Celebrates

- God loves to restore souls. Let's celebrate the people who found life in Christ for the first time, including some of our Middle School Students!
- But it's not just new life. I don't care how spiritually mature you are, no one is escaping 2020 unscathed, and YET through all of the ups and downs, physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually, our God is the God who restores!
- One of the 2020 stories I'll take with me is the man in our church who a few days after he was furloughed from work, not knowing how it would impact his family financially, not knowing when he would return, called me and said, I need this. I need to slow down. I need to seek God in a fresh way. God has been calling me to more, a greater investment in my family, a greater investment in his kingdom, but I've been putting him off. Now is the time.

T: Our God is the God of restoration. Our God is the God of revival. He brings us back to life. He strengthens us! Wherever you need restoration today, our God restores!

3. Our God leads (23:3-4).

"He leads me in paths of righteousness"

- Literally, "he leads us in right paths."
- In the midst of all the uncertainty, God is our guide. He gets us where we need to go.
- God's path may not be the easy path, it may not be the quickest path, it might not be the path that makes the most sense, but it is the right path; it is the path of steadfast love (see Psalm 25:10) - hallelujah!
- Thank you God for 2020!
 - for teaching us to slow down.
 - for helping us pay greater attention to our friends and children and spouses.
 - for helping us unglue ourselves to the addictions of work, sports, entertainment, and spending loads of money at restaurants.
 - for helping us depend on you.

How many times have you asked God for wisdom?

RHC Celebrate: I'm so thankful for how God has led our pastors and staff team to pause in decision-making and say, "God, we don't know what to do. Show us. Lead us. Give us your heart, your vision, your wisdom."

It's all "for his name's sake."

- God restores and leads us so that our lives reveal his character and uphold his lofty reputation!
- That's what it means to travel down right paths, not for our sake or our glory, but for God's name and his glory!

T: But as we move into verse 4, we see that sometimes God takes us or allows us to go down a dangerous path. Read *verse 4*. The next truth I want us to see and celebrate about God is this...

4. Our God is (23:4).

When you are walking through the valley of the shadow of death... when life is most difficult, when you feel like you can't go on, when you don't want to take the next step, when you have the greatest reason to be crippled by fear and anxiety...

You don't, we don't have to fear. Why? Because our God is.... This is who he revealed himself to be.

Do you remember the conversation Moses had with God when God appeared to him in the burning bush of Exodus 3?

"Then Moses said to God, 'If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' what shall I say to them?' God said to Moses, 'I am who I am.' And he said, 'Say this to the people of Israel: 'I am has sent me to you.' " (Exodus 3:13-14)

Who is God? I AM. Self-existent. Independent. Ever present. Our God IS. OUR GOD IS WITH US! He is with us - every moment.

There is nothing like the presence of God. His presence is our peace. His presence is our comfort. His presence is our protection.

The rod and the staff were there to guide and protect the sheep from any predator seeking to endanger the sheep.

There is an inverse relationship between our vision of God and our fear (bigger vision of I AM, smaller our fears).

Or you could say: there's a proportionate relationship between our vision of I AM, and our ability to walk through the valley of the shadow of death.

But it's not just our theology, it's our appropriation of that theology. It's really believe, understanding, and KNOWING through a lived experience that OUR GOD IS... He is the I AM.

So it's not just our vision of the I AM, but our awareness of the I AM, right in the middle of our pain and our hurt and our turmoil and our 2020, that enables us to march forward unfazed and fearless!

T: Finally, number 5.

5. Our God overflows (23:5-6).

There is so much here. Receive it..

God is the Ultimate Host. He invites us to his house, his table for an unimaginable feast.

- Though we should be preparing a table for him and serving him, he flips the script and says, "have a seat!"
- And think about it. There's nothing we've done to deserve this reservation.
- Our story is Mephibosheth.

- Memphibosheth. Memphibosheth belonged to the house of King Saul. David's predecessor and notorious enemy. Added to this, the narrative tells us that Memphisosheth was crippled in both feet. He would been outcast and forsaken by others, but not by David. David showed great kindness and grace to the point where the narrative ends by saying: "Memphibosheth ate at David's table, like one of the king's sons. . . . So Memphibosheth lived in Jerusalem, for he always ate at the king's table. Now he was lame in both his feet." (2 Samuel 9:11-13)
- That's me, and if you are in Christ, that is you! We are Memphibosheth! Welcomed into the house of God, our head *anointed* by the host, God himself, a gesture of hospitality reserved for honored guests to bring refreshment.

And then when we sit down, our cup overflows. It's a picture of the abundance of God's salvation and blessing.

- Every blessing we receive in life is a gift from God. Think about your life. Open your eyes. God's goodness is overflowing!
- When you feel overwhelmed, remember: your cup is overflowing!
- And we experience all of this in the presence of our enemies. One of the best statements I heard in 2020 came from a Christian counselor named Chip Judd. He was talking about living in such a way that the demons in the unseen realm take notice of our impact for God's kingdom, and then he said: "Tonight when we go out to dinner, I'm gonna eat my lobster with the devil watching."

YES!! RHC Celebrates

- I'm gonna eat my veal saltimbocca with the devil watching. You follow me. Some of you aren't with me yet.
- I'm going to experience God's goodness through Groups with the devil watching!
- We're going to receive God's strength as we seek racial justice with the devil watching!
- We're going to support our missionaries, like we did exceeding our goal for "Multiply March," with the devil watching!
- We're going to multiply our reach to the community by live streaming our entire service.
- I'm going to hit my knees again with the devil watching!

God is so Good. We feast. We are anointed (yes, Holy Spirit filled!). We are victorious, because God is so good. Our cup overflows!

How have you seen God's grace and goodness this year?

Conclusion:

Verse 6 is a declaration that I hope you receive as a promise.

"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me... (that means it's pursuing us, its running after us [who knows God is running after you - right now, with these words!] it's chasing us down!) all the days of our life, and we will dwell, we will keep returning to our Father's house "forever"/"for length of days."

The future is breaking into the present. The not yet is to be experienced now, in part, yes, but in reality.

2020 has been hard, but 2020 has been good because our God is so, so good!