

BELOVED PSALMS Series
The Lord Is My Shepherd
Psalm 23 (Part 4)

ANNOUNCEMENTS :

- Anniversary
- Inviting People to become Prayer walkers in their own community

INTRODUCTION :

Last week, we studied the most well-known verse in the Bible

4 Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,

We showed you the Biblical principle that one of the reasons why the Lord allows us to go through the dark shadows of life is for us to get closer to Him.

God wants a REALationship more than just a Relationship

Story : I had a conversation with Marcus Verbrugge and before we ended the conversation, he asked about Chicay. He knew about my wife surviving cancer three times. And he asked me how I felt about it now. I said, “I thank God for it”. I saw in his face he was surprised that I was thanking God for my wife’s cancer. He asked why? I told him, “It’s because God became real to me.” I know He’s real, not just because of head knowledge and I studied the Bible but He showed Himself real. He asked, “How?” I told him the story when Chicay was in the middle of her battle with cancer, after a long day at work where I was so stressed, tired and knowing that I will be going home seeing my wife in her situation, I was really so down and depressed that while I was walking in the parking lot towards my car, I just looked up to heaven and asked Him, (in Tagalog) “Lord, do you really love me?” and tears were rolling down my cheeks. When I got into the van, my cellphone rang and when I answered it, it was a pastor whom I haven’t talked for awhile and he just asked me how I was and etc, I told him I’m not doing too good but I asked him why did he call? And he said to me that throughout the whole day, I was on his mind and God was telling him to tell me that “Mahal na mahal ka ng Dios.”

I wasn’t able to hold back my tears and I cried knowing that God is real. He’s not just a textbook God to me. He is real!!! And to think, He orchestrated everything that I would be in the pastor’s mind since morning and the timing was perfect.

And today, we will see in this Psalm, how in the midst of a problem, God wants to show us how He loves us.

Psalm 23 : 1 The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not be in want. 2 He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, 3 he restores my soul. He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name’s sake. 4 Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. 5 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. 6 Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Prayer

REVIEW :

We already studied

I. MY LORD GIVES ME SATISFACTION

The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not be in want. 2 He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, 3 he restores my soul.

II. MY LORD GIVES ME DIRECTION

He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

Very important lesson to know if what we are doing is according to God's direction.

III. MY LORD GIVES ME PROTECTION

4 Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

IV. MY LORD GIVES ME RECOGNITION

5 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. 6 Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Obviously this last part will be divided into two parts since we cannot cover everything in just one hour.

One thing you will realize if you study again the context of this Psalm is the transitions. I showed you last week from verse 1 to 3, the subject is in the third person, **“He”** and then it transitioned into the second person in the middle of the verse 4 up to verse 6 **“You”** which shows the intimacy created between God and us when we are in the middle of a problem.

But there is another transition. There is a transition in metaphors.

From verses 1 to 4, it shows our Lord as a shepherd which means we are a sheep.

But from verses 5 to 6, it now shows our Lord as a gracious and loving host and we are His friend or part of His household.

and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

One of the best assurances in the world is for us to realize that if you believe in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, God recognizes you as His child and our Lord Jesus recognizes you as His friend.

Illustration : I remember this story about an adolescent boy who was known as the child of a loose woman in the small town. People around town tease him and when they see him, they would mention something like, “Whose child are you? You look like the child of the barber” Or “You look like the child of the butcher” Or you look like the child of the baker. He likes going to church because he likes to hear the Word of God but he sits at the back because he doesn’t anyone to notice him and immediately after

the singing, he would leave the church because he doesn't want the people to see him because he doesn't want to be teased again. But one day, once the congregational singing was finished, he did the usual escape tactic but this time, the pastor caught him on the shoulder. The pastor smiled at him and said, "Hmm... whose child are you?" The boy cringed because he knows he will hear the same thing again. But the pastor said, "Oh I know, you look like a child of God. Live like it." That statement changed the life of the child and if my memory serves me correct, that child grew to either become a governor or a senator of certain State in the U.S.

There's a lot of benefit if you realize that our Lord recognizes you as His friend or part of His family.

IV. MY LORD GIVES ME RECOGNITION

1. His anointing and favor
2. His assurance forever

1. His anointing and favor

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows

Context again :

Historically, remember, that this must be written at a time when David was kicked out of his throne by his own son Absalom and he is being hunted down by his enemies.

Textually, we know in the text that it implies that the person was still in the middle of his problem or challenge or was remembering the time he was in the middle of the problem *4 Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil,*

Culturally,

Etymology : schulchan *table* "king's table", by implication, God is preparing a meal for you. God is preparing a feast for you.

You anoint my head with oil;

This is done to distinguished friends or guests or family, who have just come home and the servants will wash their feet and they will be poured "anointing" fragrance on their head for them to relax.

Illustration : When Zak comes home from Montreal and it's near dinner time, his mom would say, "O sige freshen up first, ligo ka muna, relax ka" so you will enjoy dinner more.

my cup overflows

His cup is a cup of wine together with dinner. It's not only that the cup is filled but it's overflowing. It's a symbol of abundant blessing and celebration.

Now here is what baffles me regarding the start of verse 5

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows

This is all happening in the *presence of my enemies*

Supposedly, if you are in the middle of a fierce battle, you don't do that in front of your enemies. But apparently God sets up the table for you to bid you to eat and relax and enjoy and celebrate!!!

Illustration : Imagine you are the commander of an army tasked to lead the battle in the trenches. You ask your to get his binoculars so he can see what your enemy is doing. "Ah...sir...." "Yes," says the general, "Are they preparing to do a counter offensive strike,..." "Ah no sir" answers the soldier, "Their commander has prepared a feast for them and they are refreshed and are laughing and eating." Such reaction from your enemy is baffling!

Huh?

As David Brazzeal, author of Pray Like a Gourmet writes :

"As a kid, I was taught that if you opened the Bible in the middle you'd probably land on the book of Psalms. And near the middle is everyone's favorite, the 23rd, there is this line: "You prepare a table before in the presence of my enemies." I don't know how many times I've read or recited this Psalm without pondering what that line actually means, but here is my take on it. When things are a bit tense, when life is not going at its best, when the potential for disaster is just around the corner, when your enemies are all around you - and even staring you down! - **that's when God lays out the red-checkered picnic cloth and says, "Oooo, this is a nice place. Let's hang out here together for a while...just you and me."**

Application : You see the enemy launches a mighty offensive weapon against you and his aim is to make you miserable, to steal your joy, destroy you and your loved ones and kill whatever strength you have and then he sees you laughing, celebrating and having the grandest time of your life. Why? It's because the **LORD PREPARES A TABLE BEFORE ME....ANOINTS ME, OVERFLOWS MY CUP IN FRONT OF MY ENEMIES.**

What is God saying here?

Yes, I know you have enemies out there. I know there are some people who hate you or who wants to destroy you right now. I know you are in the middle of a trial right now but this is the time to relax because this is the time I will show you and the people around you that my favor, my blessings (my table) is on you. And what is the greatest favor or blessing of God to us during these times...**HIMSELF!!!**

And what does God bring with Him when He is with you?

Psalm 16:11 You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

Application : In short, yes, I know you have enemies, people who hate you, people like Absalom, your own family who wants to destroy you but you don't have to focus on them. **Focus on your blessings. Focus on your table.**

As one pastor wrote,

“Here’s what I think it is: I think the psalm is saying that the Lord prepares my table before me in the presence of my enemies, the Lord anoints my head with oil in the presence of my enemies, the Lord keeps my cup full and overflowing in the presence of my enemies **so that I don’t have to focus my life on my enemies. The Lord gives me a full, rich good life so that I don’t have to fixate on my enemies. I don’t have to be bitter and angry about my enemies because I have a good life that I can focus my energies and attention on.”**

He then concludes

“Don’t worry about the people who think they are right and you are wrong, **enjoy your table.** The Lord has prepared a fine table before you. **Enjoy your table.**”

- Dean Snyder, Senior Minister

In short, God is saying, focus on my blessings not on your buwisets. Remember again, *the thief came to steal, kill and destroy but Christ came to give us life, life to the full.*
(John 10:10)

But you may say, what about my problems Lord? What about my enemies who slander me or who malign me Lord, who plots against me as in
Psalm 83:3 With cunning they conspire against your people; they plot against those you cherish.

God says, “I know” but you have to trust in me because if you trust in me and you follow me, here’s my promise to you.

Isaiah 54:17 no weapon forged against you will prevail, and you will refute every tongue that accuses you. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and this is their vindication from me,” declares the LORD.

What is our assurance again? The transitions
for you are with me

And what does God say when somebody tries to harm you.
Zechariah 2:8 for whoever touches you touches the apple of his eye--

In short, God is saying, don’t worry about your problems. Don’t focus on your enemies. Focus on me.. Enjoy your blessings.

ENJOY YOUR TABLE! (Tell that to the person beside you)

That's what Paul and Silas did in Acts 16

Acts 16 : 22 The crowd joined in the attack against Paul and Silas, and the magistrates ordered them to be stripped and beaten with rods. 23 After they had been severely flogged, they were thrown into prison, and the jailer was commanded to guard them carefully. 24 When he received these orders, he put them in the inner cell and fastened their feet in the stocks.

25 About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them.

In the middle of a seeming problem, they were worshipping God!!! Wow!

You know what happens when you enjoy your table in the midst of your problems or your enemies?

26 Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everyone's chains came loose.

Your chains will come loose. Your anxiety will be driven away. Your bitterness, your hatred that shackles you will come loose. Your heaviness of heart will melt away. Why? YOU ARE ENJOYING GOD'S TABLE!!!

Remember this : Your reaction to your problem shows the people around you who is in control of your situation or your life.

That's why the Word of God says in Romans 8

Romans 8 : 36 As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered."

37 No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

Let me explain to you the meaning of that word "More than conquerors".

Explanation : Jeric Soriano explains it "Pacquiao doing all the boxing... all the conquering and when he goes home, he gives the prize to his wife Jinkee. Jinkee is the one who is more than a conqueror!

In short : Christ is fighting the battle for us and He has already won the battle. It is during times of trial and suffering that God shows your enemies, God's anointing and favor on you.

A conqueror still has to fight but a person who is more than a conqueror has already won!

So relax, LOOK UP TO HEAVEN AND SAY TO GOD, "FOR YOU ARE WITH ME." AND in the midst of your problems, in the presence of your enemies, ENJOY YOUR TABLE!

S.G.D.