



BREATHE | **How to face ANYTHING**

The following document is a rough copy of Pastor Drost' sermon notes

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✚ Last week we started to look at **Psalms 23** (The most loved and most popular Psalm in the Bible!). Let's read it again today...

The LORD ("LORD" – small caps – is Yahweh) is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside the still waters. He restores my soul. He leads me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. 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.

Up to this point the Psalmist is using the analogy of a shepherd and his sheep, showing us that the Lord cares for us, leads us, guides us, as a loving shepherd cares for his sheep... but now the analogy changes...

he now switches **the analogy to that of an honoured guest by his host...**

we are the guest; He is the host!

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; 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 for ever.
Psalm 23

✚ Last week's message was called **BREATHE Psalms23 is HERE**

We started by looking at the first mention of "breath" in the Bible.

When God created the first humans it says...

"The LORD God formed man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." Genesis 2:7

Last week we said that the Hebrew word for **soul** is the word "néph-esh" which literally means "one who breathes". néph-esh comes from the Hebrew word naw-fásh = breath

The last line of the **book of Psalms** end this way...

"Let everything that has **breath** praise the LORD. Praise the LORD!" Ps. 150:6

Are you breathing? Take a deep breath! Take another deep breath and then say, "Praise the Lord!"

God blew into the nostrils of the first human and his lungs filled with naw-fásh and he started to breathe!

That's the first thing babies do when they are born? Breathe! THEIR LUNGS ARE FILLED WITH THE BREATH OF LIFE!

Infants breathe deep (all the way down to their belly) but as we grow older, anger, stress, fears, anxiety, worry cause us to breathe wrong!

But as we grow older, we are faced with anxiety, danger, fear, stress, anger, a threat to your survival, loosing your job, financial pressures... our bodies move into what's called "Fight or flight" mode. Our tendency is to gasp and breathe shallow (Upper chest). Powerful hormones are released throughout the body, elevating blood pressure and placing your body in a state of high alert. Glucose is driven up to your brain and into your muscles. You are ready to respond! **It's your body going into a CODE RED danger alert!**

- Short term this is not a problem. The problem is when we end up living with a constant **CODE RED!**
- This cause us to breathe wrong!
- Some research suggests that up to 95% of adults breathe incorrectly: Many use only upper chest breathing verses lower chest breathing, shallow breathing and all kinds of other breathing IRREGULARITIES.
- This result in high blood pressure, difficulty in sleeping, jumpy thoughts, difficulty focusing, irritability, anger, migraines, stress, depression and all kinds of emotional, physical and spiritual issues.

So, what does the Shepherd do for us in Psalms 23?

How does he restore our BREATH?

The LORD is my shepherd... I shall not want. **He makes me** lie down in green pastures. **He leads me** beside the still waters. **He restores my soul.**

That word "SOUL" is that same word that appears in Genesis ("néph-esh"), He restores my BREATH! **He RESTORES my physical, emotional and spiritual BREATH!** (BREATHE) "I can breathe again!"

Now notice, **IF** the Lord is my Shepherd, He will do four (4) things:

- 1) **He MAKES me** lie down (rest)
- 2) **He LEADS me** beside the still waters (quietness)
- 3) **He RESTORES me** (my soul - my breath)
- 4) **He GUIDES me** (leads me) in the right paths

The sequence is intentional!

- **He MAKES me** lie down (rest)

He makes me lie down in green pastures

Why would sheep not want to lie down?

In Phillip Keller's book "*A Shepherd looks at Psalms 23*" he explains that it is almost impossible to get sheep to lie down unless these requirements are met:

1. Because of their timidity sheep won't lie down if they are afraid
2. Because of their social makeup within the flock, sheep won't lie down if they feel friction with other sheep.
3. Sheep will not lie down if they are bothered by flies or parasites
4. Sheep will not lie down if they are hungry

David's first job was that of a shepherd. He knew about sheep! When he says that **IF** God is our Shepherd then he will "**make us lie down in green pastures**" he is intentional in his wording.

What is taking your rest away?

What gives us unrest? What's irritating you? Consuming your peace?

- *fear?*
- *an upset with another person?*
- *unforgiveness*
- *a constant hunger for more?*

Illustration: Cookie letting me deal with a bug bite

Will you let Him be your Shepherd and "make" you lie down?

"I will both lie down in peace, and sleep; For You alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety."
Psalm 4:8 (NKJV)

- **He LEADS me** beside the **STILL** waters (quietness)

I'm aware that in the traditional version of Psalm 23 there are two "leads me" (He "leads me beside still waters" and "He leads me in the paths of righteousness"). But these two times are different Hebrew verbs:

- The first one is "lead" as in walking in front of you and taking you (You follow!)
- The second is to "lead" as in standing behind you and guiding you in the right path... a better translation in English is GUIDE!

He LEADS me beside the **STILL** waters (quietness)

The Shepherd leads you, invites you, calls you **to quiet still moments**, away from the "noise" of life, away from the business, the deadlines, the pressures, so that He can restore you, your soul, your breath, your emotions, your thoughts!

- Sometimes for me it's a quiet walk (Just talking to God from my heart and LISTENING)
- Most often it is in the quietness of the morning

"In the morning, O Lord, You will hear my voice; In the morning I will lay my prayer before You and eagerly wait." Psalm 5:3

As He restores my soul – my breath – my peace... He can now speak to me and guide me...

He GUIDES me in the right paths

- You cannot get clear guidance **UNTIL** your soul is restored (Inner peace) because you are being driven by the anxiety, the cares of life, by the fear!

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures (He causes me to rest). He leads me beside the still waters (He quiets my inner world). He restores me (my soul – my breath). **Then out of that inner peace**, He guides me (leads me) in the paths of righteousness (In the right paths) for his name's sake. **Even though...**

No matter what! Whatever may come! Worst case scenario!

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me.

Shepherds had to guide their sheep through the most dangerous dark valleys filled with danger and the threat of death!

And David is saying, "If the Lord is your Shepherd, He will bring you rest and quiet your inner world and restore your soul (your breath). And when He has restored you, then He can guide you on the right path so that you will be able to face ANYTHING! "even though!"

Psalms 23 tells us how to face ANYTHING!

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me.

Illustration:

This winter, at some point we will be getting a nor'easter winter storm. It, most likely, will knock out power and cause closures and many of us will be snowed in for hours.

- Prior to the storm many of us will fill the bathtub with water, make sure the generator has plenty of gas, extra food (just in case) and we have a back-up source of heat.
- **You don't wait until the storm hits!**

In the same way, in your life there will be storms, crisis, trials... it's INEVITABLE! You will go through dark valleys, dark moments in life! Psalms 23 is telling you how to be prepared to face anything!

If you are filled with anxiety and fear, if you don't let the Shepherd make you lie down, lead you to quiet waters, restore your soul so you can breathe freely again, if you don't know what it is to be guided by His gentle inner voice, you will be unprepared for the storm!

- Like a police officer or a firefighter who responds to a crisis unprepared physically, emotionally or mentally with gear that isn't up to code... **trouble!**

Psalms 23 is telling us how to be prepared to face ANYTHING!

Are you ready for the dark valleys ahead!

✚ **One very important closing observation: The dark valleys bring us closer to the Shepherd**

Notice the movement in the nominative pronouns...

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. **He** makes me lie down in green pastures. **He** leads me beside the still waters. **He** restores my soul. (It's like David is talking about God) **He** guides me in the paths of righteousness for **his** name's sake. (Now we enter the tough time! The dark valleys of life) Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for **You** are with me. (The conversation turns intimate with God!) **Your** rod and **Your** staff they comfort me.

Sheep walk closer to the Shepherd in the valleys of darkness!
There's nothing like a crisis to bring you closer to God!

- In good times you have devotions;
in difficult times you seek His face

- In good times you go to church on Sundays
in difficult times you cry out to God on Mondays/Tuesdays etc.

Illustration: My dog Cookie and the lightning storm (Normally she's a mommy's dog!)

Are you ready for the dark valleys ahead!

Jesus called out with a loud voice, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit (Gr./Heb.=breath)" When he had said this, he breathed his last breath." Luke 23:46

He gave His last breath for you; will you give you breaths to Him?