



## Who's In Control Here?

Text: Psalm 23

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1. TA mentioned that one of the areas in which we constantly grab for control is the desire to prove that we are enough.
  - a. How often do you ask yourself “Am I \_\_\_\_\_ enough?”
  - b. What comes to mind in that blank? What is it that makes you anxious or insecure? Why?
2. TA likened this life to being like a never-ending season of The Voice. He said that we often are trying to prove ourselves to various “panels”–family, him/her, our employer, or God. Who is your panel?
  - a. Read Colossians 3:1-17. What does Paul mean when he says that we are “hidden in Christ?”
  - b. What does this say about our identity?
  - c. How do we find ourselves hidden in Christ?
3. Psalm 23 is not stationary, but migratory. It represents not just one snapshot of green pastures and still waters, but a movement throughout different trails and seasons of life we all experience. Psalm 23 teaches us that the Lord isn't just a shepherd; He's your shepherd. Take a moment to read Psalm 23 together, emphasizing all the personal pronouns that refer to God (He, my, I, your, you, etc.)
  - a. How does this impact your understanding of God as your shepherd?
  - b. How have you seen your dependence on God increase through different seasons of life?
4. Think about your most recent experience with pain.
  - a. Now try to assess. Is your pain unnecessary (caused by your unwise or even sinful choices) or unavoidable (something you didn't do anything do deserve and came as a result of living in a fallen world)?
  - b. What was your first response: to numb it, suppress it, fake it, or embody it?
  - c. Which do you see most in your life, especially in any current painful situations you may be going through?
5. Read Psalm 23:4. God doesn't promise His people a life free from pain. What does He promise?
  - a. How does this promise free us from fear of evil?
  - b. How does this promise speak to your current situation?

Challenge: Romans 3:23 tells us the truth that we are indeed not enough, nor can we be on our own. However, what did God do to show you how valuable you are in His eyes, despite your brokenness? (See

Luke 15:1-10 and Romans 5:8) Before you dismiss this answer too quickly, really pause and reflect on this truth. What difference could this make in your life if you truly embraced that through Christ, the Almighty Creator of the universe, God sees you this way?

Prayer: Dear God, thank You that You are our good Shepherd and we can trust You with our lives. Thank You for your leadership and sovereignty. Thank You for Your guidance and care for all our days. Thank You that you restore our souls, give us peace, and bring us hope for all of our tomorrows. Thank You for Your protection and strength that surrounds us like a shield. Thank You that we never have to fear. Thank You for Your goodness and love that follows after us and chases us, even when we're unaware. Thank You Lord, that You trustworthy and able, that You are our refuge and hope.

In You alone is rest and peace. We praise You for the assurance that we will dwell with You forever.

In Jesus' Name,  
Amen.

## STUDY DEEPER

### Living in the Valley—For Now

The Gospels tell us what happened to Jesus when He entered Jerusalem. It is the testimony of history's most important event and we can hold it in our hands. It is the testimony of four, God-inspired authors whose words we've read and celebrated this spring. And then there's the book of Psalms.

Like the Gospels, the Psalms give us a fascinating picture of the Savior. Psalm 22 especially stands out. Jesus quotes Psalm 22:1 on the cross and the whole narrative of His crucifixion draws imagery from "the afflicted one" found there. Not only was He forsaken (Psalm 22:1), He was also scorned and mocked by onlookers (Psalm 22:6–7), He thirsted (Psalm 22:15), He was surrounded by ruthless Gentiles (Psalm 22:16), His hands and feet were pierced (Psalm 22:16), His garments were divided and lots were cast for His clothing (Psalm 22:18).

As Christians, we simply can't read Psalm 22 without seeing Jesus. Then Psalm 24 comes right behind it. If Psalm 22 is a Good Friday meditation, Psalm 24 is our Easter morning song. This kingly chorus is commonly associated with the reign of Jesus as our victorious ruler. But between Psalm 22 and Psalm 24 sits an even more famous Psalm—the beloved 23rd. Many of us instantly recognize its first words: "The LORD is my shepherd" (Psalm 23:1). But what exactly is it getting at?

How do we read Psalm 23 together with Psalm 22 and Psalm 24?

I think these three Psalms say something astounding about Jesus, and are deeply inspiring for how we live. Jesus is the afflicted one, the anointed one, and the satisfied one—and this has everything to do with where we are right now in this world.

### **The Afflicted One of Psalm 22**

In an unparalleled way, Psalm 22 captures the suffering of the Messiah in the first person. David's voice says, "Why have you forsaken me?" and, "I am a worm and not a man," and, "I am poured out like water." We step inside the mind of the afflicted man—of Jesus—to feel His pain and see His faith. Faith is an amazing theme here. The afflicted one is forsaken. But as we began to see, He's not ultimately forsaken. "For [God] has not despised or abhorred the affliction of the afflicted, and he has not hidden his face from him, but has heard, when he cried to him" (Psalm 22:24). Affliction is not the end of the story. The suffering one will eventually eat and be satisfied (22:26).

And as we read on in Psalm 22, the sound of affliction turns to foreshadowing deliverance. Even in the thick of His pain and restlessness, the afflicted one knows that God can be trusted. He knows that God is faithful (Psalm 22:2–5). Right before our eyes, we see the Messiah forsaken, but not utterly forsaken. Then suddenly there's a twist: the entire world is going to worship the LORD one day! Just like that, "For kingship belongs to the LORD, and he rules over the nations" (Psalm 22:27–28).

Psalm 22 gives us a vivid portrait of affliction, alludes to the resurrection, and then closes with a future-facing kingly reign. It's all right here in a psalm that the Gospel writers show Jesus fulfilling.

## **The Anointed One of Psalm 24**

Jump to Psalm 24 where the theme of kingship gets even clearer.

To be sure, the kingship theme doesn't begin in Psalm 24. We've already seen it starting triumphantly in Psalm 2:6. Just flipping back a couple pages from Psalm 24, the Messiah's kingly reign is explicit in Psalm 18:50: "Great salvation he brings to his king, and shows steadfast love to his anointed, to David and his offspring forever." And then the theme plays again in Psalm 20:4 and Psalm 21:2 when God grants the king whatever he desires—just as God said He'll do for the king in Psalm 2:7–8.

Psalm 24 comes at the high point when the king takes his place on the throne. That's what is behind the epic chorus of "Who Is This King Of Glory?" It is a coronation song. The righteous king of Psalm 24:4 (like the righteous man of Psalm 1:1–3 and Psalm 15:2–3) ascends to the LORD's hill (like the hill in Psalm 2:6 and Psalm 15:1).

The king has triumphed, and he proceeds to the seat from where he will rule the nations, until every last one of his enemies become his footstool (Psalm 110:1–2).

## **The Satisfied One of Psalm 23**

So we see affliction and a glimmer of hope in Psalm 22. We celebrate a victorious monarchy in Psalm 24. And Psalm 23 comes right in the middle. So what's its role?

Psalm 23 serves as the bridge between affliction and triumph. Both for Jesus and for us.

The pain of the afflicted one in Psalm 22 is translated into contentment and trust in Psalm 23. There is pain, real pain. Darkness surrounds this suffering one. Insults are blasted. The mouth of the lion opens wide. The wild ox readies its head for a jab. But God is the rescuer. God is the shepherd. He leads and restores. Even though the afflicted one walks through the valley of the shadow of death, God is there to guide and rescue and comfort (Psalm 23:4).

The afflicted one is forsaken, but not utterly forsaken. And therefore, the afflicted one doesn't fear. In fact, he's satisfied, he "shall not want." God prepares a table for him in the presence of his enemies. They are so defeated that he will feast in front of them—he is more than a conqueror (Romans 8:37). He is victorious, and God anoints him (Psalm 23:5). So he speaks, "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life." Yes, even through the affliction, even through the valley, even through the grave. God's goodness and steadfast love—God's unswerving faithfulness—will pursue me to the uttermost.

He closes in Psalm 23:6, "I shall return to the house of the LORD forever." The verb here "return" is often translated "dwell." It is similar in the Hebrew, and the Greek version of the Old Testament renders it "dwell." But the original Hebrew word is "return." The speaker in Psalm 23 is going to return to the house of the LORD. This one who has walked through the valley of the shadow of death, who has felt the nearness of God, who has triumphed over his enemies, who has been anointed. This one will return to the

temple. So lift up your heads, O gates! And be lifted up, O ancient doors that the King of glory may come in! (Psalm 24:7).

### **The Middle Then and Now**

Seen in its context, Psalm 23 is the story of the Messiah in the middle of the cross of Psalm 22 and the throne of Psalm 24.

I take it to be about how the Father sustained Jesus through His suffering to the victory of His resurrection. And how when Jesus was raised, He was vindicated. He was declared to be who He truly is—God's unique Son (Romans 1:4; Philippians 2:9). He ascended in a triumphal procession and assumed His seat as the enthroned king over all the nations. It is where He is right now, reigning over all the earth in the advance of His word and Spirit through His church.

He is reigning until He returns to judge the living and the dead, like the Apostles' Creed reminds us. And on that day we will reign with Him (2 Timothy 2:12). We will be raised, too (1 Corinthians 15:20–23). We will judge angels (1 Corinthians 6:3). We will join Him in Psalm 24.

But not yet, not now, not here. Today, we walk in Psalm 23.

Though we've been raised spiritually in Christ (Ephesians 2:6), our complete, end-time resurrection is still in the future. We are still looking forward to that day (1 Peter 1:13; Romans 8:23). In the big picture of things, our lives right now sort of feel like the valley—more acutely at some times than others. We experience real pain. We walk through affliction. We are sorrowful, yet always rejoicing.

Psalm 23 is happening now., and we know, even in the deepest hurt, that God Himself is the only source of indomitable joy. We're learning to keep our eyes on Jesus and that in Him our souls do not want.

In Him, and like Him, though we're in the valley, we fear no evil.

<https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/living-in-the-valley-for-now>