

Goodness in Me // Psalm 23 and Paul // Goodness in the Middle # 3¹

Announcement

Before we dive in this weekend I wanna call your attention to something that's happening **tomorrow** and ask you to join in with it.

We're calling our church to set aside tomorrow—**Monday, June 6—to fast and pray**. One thing we will never stop doing is emphasizing the importance of prayer and fasting here at TSC. We want to be people who intentionally declare that we both *want* and *need* God to work in us and through us, particularly this summer, and one of the best (and most biblical!) ways to do that is through fasting.

We'll have some resources on our website for you to help you fast and pray throughout the day...and then I'd like to ask you to join me tomorrow night at 7:30p ONLINE for a short virtual prayer night that I will lead. So if you have your SG on Monday nights, plan on hopping on and joining. You can gather with some friends or family, and meet us on YouTube or live.summitchurch.com at 7:30p as we end our Day of Fasting and Prayer together. Be honest: you'll spend more than 30 mins on social media on Monday, so what's it to take 30 mins out of your evening to join in with your Summit brothers and sisters in a time of prayer? If you promise you'll be there then say nothing. . . see? Everyone will be there. It's gonna be awesome.

¹ Works Consulted: Philip Keller, *A Shepherd's Look at Psalm 23*; Dallas Willard, *Life Without Lack*; Tim Mackie: [A God of Love, a World of Suffering](#), Bridgetown Church, Portland OR; H.B. Charles Jr., "Thorn in the Flesh," sermon posted by Cutting It Straight with H.B. Charles Jr. on Jan. 26, 2015; Timothy Keller, "The Temptation of Ministry," sermon was preached at Beeson Divinity School, Samford University on November 8, 2016; Tony Evans, "The Power of a Thorn, part 2," sermon posted by Tony Evans - Radio on May 26, 2017.

Introduction

Psalm 23, if you have your Bible. Here's something I've observed as a pastor: A lot of people quit following God right after high school or college because they asked God to do something they felt was perfectly reasonable for them to ask and God didn't do it and then they struggled to understand what the point of this whole church thing was. They couldn't understand why a good, loving God wouldn't do what they asked. When they asked, they even upped their game--they upped their church attendance, started praying, even giving--but when nothing happened, they started thinking things like, "God, what's wrong with me?" and that turned into "God, what's wrong with you?" to "God are you even there?" and even if you are, I'm not sure if all this effort is worth it."² For some, that was more of a dramatic, "I'm NOT going back; for others it was more of a slow fade... church became less and less of a priority until you just realized one day that you hadn't been in 6 months. And now you are not quite sure what you believe anymore.

Believe it or not, Psalm 23 is written to people in those circumstances. Scholars believe that David wrote this Psalm at one of the lowest points of his life--either when he was on the run from King Saul, who was trying to kill him because he was jealous of him; or, years later when he was on the run from his son Absalom, who had staged a coup and banished his father from the kingdom. Both of these seasons for David were very dark--dark with personal betrayal and uncertainty deep heartbreak. Maybe that's where you are: joblessness; divorce; a miscarriage; betrayal by a friend.

² Andy Stanley

In the midst of all that ugliness, David wrote this beautiful Psalm. This Psalm is not sentimental; it's a gritty wrestling with the goodness of God in the midst of real disappointment. I've called this series "Goodness in the Middle"--the idea that a lot of us believe at the start God is good: he paid for your sins on the cross and he saved you, so he was good there, at the beginning; and he's good over there, in the future--one day, in heaven when we experience all the bliss of that--but it's now, right here in the middle, that we struggle to believe in God's goodness. It's sometimes hard to reconcile God's goodness with the darkness of life now.

Psalm 23 has **3 basic ideas:**

1. The presence of the Shepherd is our life, our joy, our safety, and

our fulfillment (David said, "The Lord is my Shepherd, I have no needs." He said that not because he had no needs, but because the Lord was his shepherd, and he knew that if the shepherd was close, he had no real needs. As long as the Shepherd is close, I'm good.")

- We talked about 3 different kinds of faith the first week, and we used Job as an example.
- The first was the faith of obedience (I actually used 'propriety' because that was Dallas Willard's word, but let me say 'obedience.'). This is level-1 faith. You obey God, you put him first, and he blesses you. This is a perfectly legitimate kind of faith! Before your theological britches all twisted up into a wad, Scripture says (Matthew 6:33...) Put him first in your marriage and your family and your career and your time and he blesses and multiplies you. That's legitimate.

- But then, as with Job, God lets you go through a season where it doesn't work like that. Job said, "I did everything right and 'that which I most feared has happened to me.'"
- Or Joseph--I resisted the temptation. I responded with integrity and forgiveness; I put you first and served you; I kept up my end of the bargain, and THIS is what happened. And that forces you to faith level 2, where Job said, "*Though he slay me, yet will I trust him.*" "I know you're good, God. I know it. You proved that at the cross. And though I can't understand what you're doing now, I'll trust you. Though you slay me, yet will I trust you." And that's incredible faith, but we think we're done. **But there's another level.**

- And that's the faith of sufficiency, the faith of Psalm 23, where you say, "If I have the Shepherd, I'm good." Even though I have all these needs, because he's close I can be at rest. His presence is the table I feast at in the presence of my enemies or when I walk through the valley of the shadow of death. The Lord is my Shepherd. I have no needs."
- So, that was week 1: The presence of the Shepherd is our life, our joy, our safety, and our fulfillment

2. Second major point: God is always good, but the arc of God's goodness is longer than we typically think

- Goodness and mercy are always following me, but how far back there are they?
- And there we used the story of Joseph. Joseph had to wait a LONG time to see how all the chaos and tragedy of his life were being used by God to produce something good. The same thing is true in your life. If you are a believer, God is always up to something good in your life, though the arc of it is often longer than we often expect.

- I love how John Piper says it: At any given point, God is up to like 10K things in your life, and you are aware of, at best, maybe 3 of them.

3. (3rd major point; what we're looking at today) **God uses the times of our waiting to work good in us**

Before we unpack this truth, since this is our last week, could we just stand and read Psalm 23 together? Let's all stand:

Psalm 23: A Psalm of David.

Let's read together:

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 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.

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

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

You may be seated.

David in this Psalm is clearly aware that God is doing something good *in him* through this ordeal. He says several things to that effect.

Vs. 4: "Your rod and your staff, they comfort me." Rod means protection and discipline; staff means guidance. David says, "I recognize that some of this affliction, this pain, is you disciplining me and shaping me. It feels painful, but you're taking away false trusts and false hopes so I can trust more fully in you."

Jump back to vs. 3: "He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake." Sheep, I told you, are terrible creatures of habit--they walk the same paths over and over because they feel safe. The problem with that is that they tread these paths until all the grass is gone, and, even worse, they contaminate the soil with layers and layers of their waste and it becomes a breeding ground for parasites and disease. So, the shepherd comes along and leads them into new paths; and they don't like it at first, because they are less familiar, and they have to stay closer to the Shepherd so they don't get lost. But this is exactly what the Shepherd wants. And David said, 'I sense that you are doing the same thing with me. Putting me in new spaces, unfamiliar spaces, where I'll have to learn to trust you all over again.' Some of you are right there this morning. Listen, and I say this from very personal experience God uses upheavals--things like marital discord, problems with your kids, chaos in your career, as severe mercies that force us to him in new ways to experience new mercies and new grace. He's breaking up your foundations so you'll stay more closely tethered to him. That's probably what's in David's mind when he says, "He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake."

Vs. 5: "You anoint my head with oil." This is an interesting analogy. Most of us when we see that word "anointing," we think of it in terms of God anointing us for some ministry--like when Samuel anointed David as King. And maybe that's in the back of David's mind, but Philip Keller, who wrote the book *A Shepherd's Look at Psalm 23* says that in the context of a Shepherd with his sheep, this was not about anointing them for service. Shepherds anoint sheeps' heads with oil at 3 different times.

- When flies and gnats and mosquitoes are bothering the sheep. Oil acts as a repellent.
- Second, when the sheep break out with some skin disease on their head. Oil worked like a medicine keeping the disease from spreading.
- Third, and this is the best one. During mating season, the rams would battle to establish dominance by butting heads. You've seen it. If you have ever seen this, it can be quite traumatic. These rams can get maimed and die. So the shepherd anoints their heads with oil so they slide off each other. You should try this with your middle-school aged boys, too. It might work.

Oil in the Bible almost always represents the Spirit, and Philip Keller says he believes David is referring to how God, in the midst of trials, pours out the Spirit on us. (1) He gives us peace in the midst of all our pesty little worries and niggling anxieties. (2) He fills us with the Spirit to fight against the contagion of worldliness and sin growing in our hearts; and (3) He pours his love out in us so we can forgive and be patient with others. David says, "In the midst of this trial, God is doing good in me." Something in the message for everybody!

And one more: vs. 5: "My cup overflows." We saw this the last few weeks; my time of brokenness and need forces me to lean into the Lord, like a sponge being submerged in water. And what happens is that I get so full of the Lord that when life squeezes me, what comes out of me is the Holy Spirit. And that makes me a blessing to others: It's not just that my cup is full, it's so full that I overflow with Jesus, and when life squeezes me what comes out of me is him; when life cuts me I bleed God's grace.

So, I say all that to say: David seems clearly aware in this Psalm that God is at work *in him* during his time of wilderness. **God uses the times of our waiting to work good in us.**

Now, I want you to leave Psalm 23 and scoot over to 2 Corinthians 12, because I want to show you how Paul experienced these same realities. Paul didn't quote Psalm 23 verbatim in this passage, but you can see him wrestling with the same concepts--and, of course, he would have known this by heart.

(So, 2 Cor 12 vs. 7. As always, if you don't have your Bible, begrudgingly, I'll put this on the screen. I say "begrudgingly" because in doing this, sometimes I feel like I'm enabling the bad habit of you not bringing your Bibles to church. Statistically, you are much less likely to fall away from God if you bring your Bible to church than if you don't. Try and deny that. Right? Just teasing. Sort of.)

7 So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations (Paul had a pretty lofty assignment: God gave him revelations he was to write down as Scripture--it's pretty heady when what you say is synonymous with what God thinks, and so), **a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited.** (He says that twice: "to keep me from becoming conceited." That's clearly the purpose.)

8 Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. 9 But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. 10 For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong. 2 Corinthians 12:7-10

I love this passage. Let's explore it. **Paul had a "thorn of the flesh."** And of course, we all want to know, "What was it?" This is the kind of thing that commentaries spill great amounts of ink over. Maybe it was Paul's eyesight. I've seen commentaries make the case that Paul had

an eye disease that caused his eyes to ooze--it was gross, painful, and made it hard for him to see. They say, "This was his thorn." And that would have been a thorn. Others say, "No, he's referring to certain people who are thorn in his side." Maybe that's true, too. Paul refers to both problems at some point in his writings.

But the bottom line is, we don't know--Paul doesn't tell us. And, listen: When the Holy Spirit leaves something vague in the Scriptures, **he leaves it vague on purpose.**

So ask: Why would he leave this vague? Why would he not fill in the blank here? I think the answer is obvious: It was so that you could fill in the blank with yours. You likely have a thorn in the flesh, and Paul wants you to understand yours as he understands his.

- If Paul had told us what his thorn was, what would probably happen is we'd all play the comparison game--
 - *"Well, what I have is nothing compared to Paul's; mine is not even worth talking about. God's not even concerned about mine."*
 - *Or, we'd say, "Mine is WAY worse. See, no one understands my pain; God can't possibly have a redemptive purpose in something this bad."*
 - *Or, probably worst of all, if we had the exact same one as Paul, we'd boast about it--"You know, me and Paul have the exact same pussing eye problem. So, clearly I'm special."*

The Holy Spirit leaves Paul's affliction vague so that you can apply what Paul says about his to yours.

Write this down: Suffering is not a competitive sport: My suffering does not gain meaning by comparing how bad it is to yours. The point is for you to look in your life, and you'll likely see where God is doing something similar in your life to what he did with Paul.

I want you to see how Paul processes this:

- In **vs. 7** Paul calls it a thorn **"of the flesh"**--which means it is some kind of physical thing.
- But then he says, it is a **"messenger of Satan."** Uh-oh. That dials it up a bit. This physical thing has spiritual power. Satan is using it to attack me, discourage me, and tempt me. To slow me down or bring me down. To wear me out.
- **But wait a minute. There's more.** Paul says this thorn was "given" to him in the flesh. Given... by *whom*? You say, "By Satan." No. See where it says, "The thorn was given to *keep me from becoming conceited.*" Who would want to keep Paul from being conceited? Satan? Hardly! Satan would love for Paul to get prideful. No. The thorn ultimately comes FROM GOD.

Write this down: **"The thorn may come through Satan, but the thorn comes from God—and that's good news." H.B. Charles³**

- Why is this good news? Because it means God is using even the affliction of Satan to work good in you.
- I'm talking about things like:
 - Marriage problems
 - Career frustration
 - A bodily affliction
 - An ongoing temptation
 - Mental trauma
 - Struggle in ministry
 - Problems with a child

All severe mercies God uses to lead you down new paths of righteousness. In **vs. 10** Paul summarizes a whole grab bag of possibilities: **"weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities..."**

You say, "But this trial is caused by Satan. I know it. I can feel his power in it." Maybe. But if you are a believer SATAN NEVER HAS THE

³ H.B. Charles

LAST WORD IN YOUR LIFE. Your affliction, your weakness, may be caused by your flesh, your failures, your enemies, even Satan himself, but they are ultimately *from* God for good.

vs. 7 And what is God's main purpose? To keep me from becoming conceited. He says it twice in that verse. "God sent a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited."

- You see, the greatest enemy in your life is not Satan, or your critics, or your spouse, or your boss, it is pride.
- Pride is the queen mother of all sins, leading to a whole colony of other sins.
- Pride leads you to feelings of self-sufficiency, which makes you comfortable with independence from God. Wandering from him. Not desperately seeking his will, his counsel, his presence. Not running to him in prayer with all your needs.

Do you ever wonder why God lets you struggle with certain sinful temptations even when you've asked him to take them away? To keep you from becoming conceited. I love how **C.S. Lewis said it:** God sometimes lets us struggle with lesser sins to keep us from the greatest one: PRIDE.

- Listen, I don't know about y'all, but if I walked around victorious over all my temptations, my sinful heart would for sure conclude that I was really good at this obeying Jesus thing: "Ain't never been a Christian like me." Which would fill me with pride, which, ironically, would make me more like Satan than ever. So, God lets me struggle so that I will say with Paul, "*Oh wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from this body of death?*" And "*I am convinced that in me, that is, in my flesh, nothing good dwells... The only way for Jesus to save me is to crucify my flesh and resurrection. I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live. Yet it's not I who am living the Christian life, it's Jesus living through me!*"

I have this book of letters by John Newton, the writer of the famous hymn *Amazing Grace*, and one of my favorites is one he wrote in his 80's to a friend where he confessed that by this point in his life he had always assumed that after walking with God for 50 to 60 years he'd have gotten complete victory over his temptations. He said that some of those temptations, however, felt stronger than ever. And at first that made him depressed, wondering if something was fundamentally wrong with him spiritually. But in this letter he told his friend that now he realized that God let him struggle with some of these sinful temptations and probably would until the day he died to keep him from the worst sin: pride. "True growth in grace, he said, this side of the resurrection, (listen to this) doesn't mean getting to a place where you no longer feel like you need God's grace, but growing in your awareness of just how desperate for God's grace that you really are." (John Newton)

- **So, God may let you struggle with certain sins so that you will stay closely tethered to his grace.** That doesn't mean you ever stop praying for victory, just that God is up to something good in delaying the answer.

In the same way, "Why does God sometimes let you struggle in your career? In ministry?" To keep you from being conceited. Pride leads to feelings of independence from God, and independence from God is always the path toward Satan and a bazillion other sins. So, God may let you fail at something--even something good, so he can teach you not to boast in your flesh.

- We always assume that success in life and ministry or marriage or having children is blessing. And sometimes it is. But failure can also be. The worst thing God can do for you is let you succeed in a way that untethers you from him.
- I look at this slate of megapastors who have fallen in ministry and realize that their success got them to a place where they lost their dependence on God, and it makes me thank God for those places God has let me struggle, and fail, because there I learned to lean

on God. It's like John Stott says, "Pride is your greatest enemy, humility is your greatest friend."

7 So to keep me from becoming conceited... a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited.

Write this down: **If dependence is the objective, weakness is an advantage.** Because your weaknesses are those places you are more likely to lean in on God.

- **Maybe you have heard of the ancient Japanese art of kintsugi:** it had beautiful designs. perfectly shaped. What made it beautiful was little gold streams running all through these random creases. I found out the final step in the forming of this pot was to take it and shatter it, and then put it back together using melted gold to seal the creases. That's what God is doing in our lives through brokenness. He fills those spots of brokenness with himself so that our **value after being broken is far greater than it was before we were!**
- **Where is God doing this to you? Can you get your mind around this: It's not to punish you, but to teach you to depend on him.**

God wants us to learn the four words that can absolutely transform your life: *GOD IS ALWAYS FAITHFUL*. Or, "The Lord is my Shepherd, I have no needs."

- And sometimes, I've heard it said, you can't know he's all you need until he is all you have! He destroys idols: takes away a relationship; destroys you financially; makes you fail; gives you a problem you can't control. Maybe something is going on at home.
- **That's God teaching you to lean on him.**

Scripture tells us to beware our STRENGTHS, not our weaknesses, because our strengths are those places where we are most likely to forget God.

- **A.W. Tozer** even said: **"It is doubtful whether God can bless a man greatly until he has hurt him deeply."**⁴ **Maybe, like Paul, God has allowed you to experience some brokenness** or hurt—he has given you a thorn in the flesh, so to speak—so you can lean more fully into him.
- ***Y'all, I look back now and recognize that two of the most growing seasons of my life happened when I failed—when I felt like I was at the end and I was insufficient for the task: Wounded. Limping. It was there I learned to depend on God. These were the two of the greatest seasons of my life.***
- **It's like Hudson Taylor said:** "God wants to give you something far better than riches and gold—or personal charisma or talent—and that is helpless dependence upon him." Sorry to overquote, it's just that is AMAZING how consistent this theme is among those people God uses greatly. Before he uses you greatly, he hurts you deeply.
- Again: **If dependence is the objective, weaknesses become our advantage.**

Now, to be clear: There's nothing wrong with asking God to take away your thorn. Don't wear your spiritual pants so tight you don't ask God to take the thorn away. I mean, Paul said, vs 8 **"Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me."**

- And that's not a reference to 3 specific times--Like, "2 Fridays ago during my quiet time, and then once before dinner last Thursday, and then once again at small group."
- Paul is likely referring here to **3 extended seasons**--seasons where he prayed intensely, got others to pray with him, probably fasted.
- In each of these seasons, Paul was hopeful that God would remove the thorn, maybe even expecting God to let him see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. But the point is when God said "no," he wasn't ignoring Paul, or putting him off--he just had a greater purpose in the trouble. So: **Don't just**

⁴ A. W. Tozer, *The Root of the Righteous*, 144.

pray for God to bring you OUT of the trouble; pray that he puts himself INTO you through the trouble.

We always pray against thorns with the awareness that we are praying to a great and faithful Shepherd who knows our needs even better than we do.

To quote my friend H.B. Charles again,

- If the request is wrong, God says *no*.
- If the time is wrong, God says *slow*.
- If you ain't ready, God says *grow*.
- If the request is right, the time is right, and you're ready, God says *go*.

When God says 'no' or 'slow' or 'grow' instead of 'go,' we can trust him. Because **"Sometimes God gives you what you would have asked for if you knew what he knew."**⁵ He's the Shepherd!

And in that moment, when you don't know what to pray for yourself, be assured the Spirit is praying for you. He's always watching, taking care of needs before you even know to ask for them.

- In Romans 8 Paul says, **"Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words."** Romans 8:26
- **In our weakness he GROANS for us. Now you ask, "What does that mean he groans too deep for words?"**
 - **Well, for one, that he does so with deep emotion.** The Spirit feels our pain with us. I think one of the most moving scenes of Jesus's life takes place in John 11, when Jesus was at the tomb of Lazarus and he wept. He wept even though he knows

in a moment he'll resurrect Lazarus. I read that and think, "Why is he weeping? He knows that in just a minute, Lazarus is going to be up walking around and everyone is happy!" He weeps in that moment because he feels the pain of Mary and Martha, Lazarus' sisters whom he loves, and can't help but weep with them. What that shows me is that in your pain, right now, if you are weeping, he is weeping along with you.

- But groaning too deep for words also implies **wisdom beyond our ability to comprehend.** Paul says the Spirit prays for us "according to the will of God." **He prays God's will into our lives even when we don't know how to ask for it!**
- Struggling friend: **Be encouraged: in your moment of pain, when you can't even express the words yourself, when your physical pain or psychological trauma is so great you don't even know how to form the words, the Spirit is praying for you.**
- **My pastor growing up, Chris Gaynor's grandfather, was one of the greatest prayer-warriors I've ever known, used to tell people when they asked him to pray, "Yes, I'm praying for you. But even more importantly, Jesus is too, in the Spirit."**

VAMP

Let me close:

Maybe this weekend you are discouraged about an unanswered prayer or a struggle you just can't shake. And you're like, "God, I've done everything you've asked--why am I struggling here? Why is my marriage like this? Why am I in financial difficulty? Why is my career so bad? Why is my family suffering? Why are my kids like this?"

⁵ I think this great little line originated with Tim Keller?

- Be assured, the Lord is still your Shepherd, and he is up to something good.
- Here's how I know: You are in the care of a Shepherd who laid down his life for the sheep: he paid your sin debt for you, and if he did that, surely at work in your life now--he wouldn't go to the trouble of laying down his life for you if he was just going to neglect you in the rest of your life. He's also the Shepherd who went into the grave and came out, which means he's really good at bringing life out of death, and there really is no power that can resist him.
- He has no rivals, no equals, now and forever God you reign. With our Shepherd, we have the assurance of absolute care and overwhelming force on our side, and as long as that is true, that should change our attitude in any struggle.
- I had lunch with Hubert Davis the other day. He and his family have been a part of our church for years... Some of you Duke fans don't want to hear this. And yet, I'm also pretty sure God wants me to tell this for your own good. "Therefore, to keep me from being conceited..."
 - My prayer for him / Manek story.
 - That's what some of you are like. You are discouraged... I have good news: you have overwhelming force is on your side.

So, some of you are discouraged... For others of you, you're beyond discouraged. The unanswered prayer has shaken your faith pretty badly.

- Again, you are like, "God, I kept up my end of the deal, God... It feels like a violation of the contract. I did what was right... Like Joseph, you might say, "God, I resisted the temptation. I worked hard... I parented correctly. I dated only Christian guys. I saved sex till marriage. And this is what you gave me?"

- I know. I've been there. What I've been trying to show you is that ALL the saints have been there.
- And, get this: SO HAS JESUS. If there was every ANYONE who kept up their end of the contract it was Jesus, and he died, even praying, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" And yet, God used his death for the salvation of the world!
- If you are one Jesus' sheep, what he did with Jesus he is doing with you.
- God is up to something good in your life.

If your faith is teetering right now, there are two things I know God is doing in this trial.

He is testing you: I love the illustration of Luther's hand:**Where are you going to go? Are you going to give up on God?** These are tests to see whether you really will trust him...

- Hey, for some of you, how you respond to the trial might reveal you haven't been seeking God for the right reasons at all. God has just been a means to an end for you. I mean, if you stop seeking God because of something he failed to do for you, you have to ask if you were ever seeking him for him in the first place, or just attempting to use him to get what you really wanted.
- God will sometimes test you to see what you really want? If you get nothing else in life except for him, is he enough?
- Second thing I know he's doing: God is trying to completely rebuild your soul... **C.S. Lewis said if you think of coming to Jesus like allowing him** to come into the house of your heart, at first you're excited because he's so good at renovations. He's going to be able to clean up this, and then beautify that. And so he starts doing that. But then, **he pulls out a sledgehammer and starts tearing down walls.**
- That's because he's not trying to renovate your double-wide of a heart; he's building a palace to house a King!

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 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.

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

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

And all God's people said, "Amen!"

Let's pray... (Invitation)