

**Prayer of Preparation:** *We've come this far by faith, Leaning on the Lord, Trusting in His holy Word, He's never failed us --yet. Singin' oh, oh, oh, can't turn a-round, We've come this far by faith. Don't be discouraged with trouble in your life. He'll bear your burdens and move all misery and strife. That's why we've come this far by faith. Leaning on the Lord. Trusting in his holy word. He's never failed me yet. God of wilderness journeys, fill our hearts with grace so that we may hear and be your word this day. Amen.*

We're taking a little break in our wilderness journey this morning. A little break to do some serious praise because, excuse my vernacular, because God. This is the place and now is the time to do some serious praise...according to the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm.

The psalmist does something wonderful for us...the psalmist tells us who God is and what God does for us and through us. You know the psalm; *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 right paths for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I 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.*

God is...God leads...God restores. Those three things form our entire being. God is...God leads...God restores. God is before us, God is beside us, God is behind us, God is now, God is yesterday, and God is the future. God is.

God leads...all we must do is follow. We don't need a conference call, we don't need a step-by-step plan, we just need to follow God. And that means trusting God and God's plan for us.

God restores...God leads us to some dangerous places. God sends us to minister to all creation: we minister to people who are not like us and we go to places we have never seen before. And when we go, when we serve, when we are depleted...God restores. Ever wonder why I'm adamant that we have a time for food, drinks, and sharing when we meet? It's because God restores...and it is in food and fellowship with each other that we find restoration. It is in these moments we find that we are on this journey together to restore each other.

The psalmist writes: God is...God leads...God restores. And then...let's praise God! The next part of the psalm is what our youth would call a mic drop moment. For us...it's a praise the Lord moment. For me, it's a “Look at God” moment.

I want you to hear the psalmist praise God with a fresh ear: *Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I 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.*

The psalmist is reveling in their relationship with God...is praising God and their relationship. God is with us...God leads us...God restores us. God has formed this relationship with us, God is taking this journey with us, God has set out to comfort us...God has prepared a table before us. And, dare I say, God hasn't failed us yet?

The 23<sup>rd</sup> psalm has six verses. Six verses which spell out who God wants to be to us. Six verses which spell out that God is calling us to be in relationship, through good and bad, thick and thin, sunny days and cloudy days. Three verses of revelation and two verses of praise. And one verse that speaks to our future.

*Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD my whole life long. Siblings in Christ, hear God's good news with a fresh ear: God's promise to be with us is for our whole life long. God hasn't failed us yet.*

**Response to the Word:** *We've come this far by faith, Leaning on the Lord, Trusting in His holy Word, He's never failed us --yet. Singin' oh, oh, oh, can't turn a-round, We've come this far by faith. Don't be discouraged with trouble in your life. He'll bear your burdens and move all misery and strife. That's why we've come this far by faith. Leaning on the Lord. Trusting in his holy word. He's never failed me yet.*