

WEST CENTER CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

The Pastor's Portion *Spiritual Nourishment for the Soul*

March 22, 2020

Isaiah 43:19 says:

I am about to **do** a new thing; now **it** springs forth, **do you not perceive it?** I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.

As we being to navigate what is sure to be a lengthy season of "hunkering down", we need to recognize that God is doing a new thing. It is springing forth!

As the people of God, we have to wake up and see God in the midst of this crisis. Never forget that we are the people of God. Called and anointed for such a time as this.

In days to come we will be sacrificing our way of life for an unknown way of life. We don't know, but God does know. Let us **TRUST GOD ALWAYS AND THROUGH ALL TIMES!**

NEVER EVER SACRIFICE IN PRAYING TO OUR GOD. This is the only source of Spiritual Power

In this Lenten season, go deep into your prayer closet, read the Word of God, ask for power, protection, guidance and strength and find deep within you the source of All Power: God! And **DO NOT NEGLECT THE "least of these!** Find a way to donate money and time to feed children, the homeless and the poor. That is our mandate!



Take the ALMIGHTY JOURNEY OF FAITH:

40 DAYS OF PRAYER, MEDITATION AND HEALTHY EATING

OUR SERVICES ARE SUSPENDED FOR NOW. CHECK OUR WEBSITE AND FACEBOOK PAGES FOR REGULAR UPDATES. LOOK FOR AN INVITAION TO JOIN OUR ZOOM WORSHIP SERVICES ON SUNDAY MORNINGS AT 11AM.



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Image above created for West Center Church by Jeremy Tressler. Please thank him for the gift of his talent to help West Center reach out to the community.

West Center Church seeks to worship the Living God, being Led by the Holy Spirit to carry on the work of Jesus in justice, peace simplicity and unity.

Weekly Inspiration: Letters to the Church by Francis Chan.

"If prayer isn't vital for your church, then your church isn't vital. This statement may be bold, but I believe it's true. **If you can accomplish your church's mission without daily, passionate prayer, then your mission is insufficient, and your church is irrelevant.** The early church devoted themselves to prayer. They knew they couldn't exist without it. If God didn't come through, they could never fulfill the mission He had given them. So, they were constantly on their knees together."

"Basically, there are two paths you can walk: faith or fear. It's impossible to simultaneously trust God and not trust God." Charles Stanley

"Much violence is based on the illusion that life is a property to be defended and not to be shared." Henri Nouwen

"Compassion challenges us to cry out with those in misery, to mourn with those who are lonely, to weep with those in tears.

Compassion requires us to be weak with the weak, vulnerable with the vulnerable, and powerless with the powerless. **Compassion** means full immersion in the condition of being human." Henri Nouwen

Prayer:

We thank you for the outpouring of your spirit. Break chains this morning

Came captive of the enemies of fear and uncertainty and anxiety, and when we leave this space, we will leave this space fools for Christ

Have your way God, have your way. We the clay will never tell you the potter what we the clay want to be. Mold us and make us unto your will

You've been good, and that is not the best word we could use, but with our limited language, you've been better to us than we could be to ourselves.

23rd Psalm

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

² He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.

³ He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

⁴ Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: *for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.*

⁵ *Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.*

⁶ *Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.*

For eye opening power we say thank you. God today, for arm moving, leg moving, tongue talking power we say thank you. Hide me behind the cross for just a little while so that your people will see and hear you and not Kris. Come Now Holy spirit, come heavenly dove with all thy quickening power, kindle the flame of sacred love in these sheepish hearts of ours
The 23 Psalm is perhaps one of the most popular and well memorized psalms in the Bible. And, it is popular and well memorized and recited because it captures every element of how God interacts with the people of God.

It speaks of relationship, Provision, Comfort, Peace, Healing, Guidance, Purpose

Trials & Testing, Protection, Faithfulness, God's Assurance, Deliverance, Consecration, Abundance, Grace, Security and eternity.

Let's talk about the background of this psalm a bit:

Psalm 23 was not penned by David when things were going well, something specific was going on: Historians have speculated **when** the Psalm of David was written. It could have been written when David was on the run from Saul the King whom he served who became jealous and envious and who sought to destroy him, or it could have been written when David was on the run from his own son Absalom who had killed his brother, and who once he fled his father's kingdom, decided that he wanted to be the ruler, and overtake David. David loved his son, and was agonizing over this tragic family dysfunction.

No matter which it was, it was a serious crisis for David, and he was on the run from some enemy or foe. David understood when you go thru crisis you have to begin to look towards God, because God has made a promise that God would be right there with you.

Listen to the words of David and today we are only talking about the first three verses:

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. This is the relationship that David has with God! To really understand what David is talking about you have to know the role of a Shepherd to the flock of sheep.

The Shepherd is a watchman. The Shepherd is called upon to be on the constant lookout for the approach of possible foes, birds of prey, stronger animals and human beings that would seek to lead them to a different flock or in a different direction.

The Shepherd is a guide. Sheep have no sense of direction. In fact, they can see, but they can only see 6 feet in

front of them, so they are not sure where to go.

The Shepherd is also a physician, tending to ailing and injured sheep

The Shepherd is a savior: because sheep are so myopic, if they find a green pasture, they will graze on it and follow it wherever it leads, making them susceptible to being separated from the flock and the Shepherd. It is the job of the Shepherd to make sure the Sheep stay on the right path, do not go astray at the first sign of a greener pasture.

The Shepherd is a Provider: Sheep cannot feed themselves nor water themselves. They must be conducted to the water and the pasture. The grass varies with the seasons, and the shepherd is ever changing the location of his flock. Unless wisely fed they become emaciated and sick.

Finally, the Shepherd is a lover: The shepherd was a lover of the sheep, and it was because of his attachment to them that in time of danger he thought not of himself, but of them. In defending them he was willing to lay down his life. This is the crowning virtue of the shepherd—his self-sacrificing love.

THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD, I SHALL NOT WANT!

² He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.

Despite the fact that David was on the run from his enemies, despite his fear and heightened anxiety, David recognized God as one who gave him comfort! He gave him the ability to rest in the midst of the storm, in the midst of the trial, in the midst of the chaos, God let David get rest. And not just rest, but peace! God filled David with a sense of peace that was like that of still water, calm and beautiful. And notice that he says he makes him lie down, that is because we often do not know how to rest ourselves, we become anxious and troubled and worried about the future of which we cannot be assured anyway. We become

so afraid that we can barely sleep. But the Lord is our Shepherd! And it is the Lord that will give us peace and make us rest and restore our souls.

Verse three says:

³ He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake

He restoreth my soul. What you need to know about David was although he was a man after God's own heart, David was not a saint! He was a sinner, a murderer, he plotted against his brother, slept with his sister in law, killed many and was generally a rogue, even though he was chosen by God. But, you see, God has the ability to restore even our sinful souls, and God does not do it so that we may be glorified, but so that God's name will be glorified, and that God will be lifted up on high.

Too often we take credit for things over which we have no claim of credit. We do not give God the glory for our successes or our triumphs. But God gives us victory not we ourselves.

So, on this day, we want to thank God that God is our Shepherd, our provider, our protector, our guide, our physician, the lover of our souls! We thank God that God leads us to a place of rest and restoration, a place of peace, even in the midst of the storm. We thank God that God leads us in the right path for the glory of God's name.

Let us Pray: God now, we come today to say thank you for being better to us and better for us than we could ever be to ourselves or each other. Help us God to find a place of peace. In these times of global crisis, of widespread fear and uncertainty, Help us God to recognize you as our Shepherd. Help us not to lean to our own understanding, but to follow you in all your ways and you will guide our paths. Help those who are sick and suffering, whether it be with the corona virus or any other illness. Help those who are in need, help those who are losing their jobs and their way of life.

Help us to see this crisis as a way to find our way BACK to you, the source of all Being, the ground of our being, the very essence of all that has ever been, is now or ever will be. Help us God to remember that you are the potter and we are the clay!

We love you God, and we worship you and we lift this prayer by your power, and we conclude by praying in the manner your son taught us to pray:

Our Father