

Psalm 23
Message #2 (10:15) in the series "Whose Verse Is It Anyway?"

Pastor David Wolverton

For those of you joining us today, my name is David Wolverton, and I am one of the Pastors here. It's my joy to be with you today.

So the powerful truth of this passage of scripture, Psalm 23, I don't know who submitted this. This is this is an incredible passage of scripture. How many of you here, just in the house by a show of hands, how many of you have ever heard this psalm before? Pretty much just about everybody and so what I what I feel led to do this morning, the Holy Spirit just kind of spoke in a just a brief moment to freshen this up a little bit and to take a different track in interpreting this powerful passage. And so often when we hear this, we hear it at times when we're seeking comfort. We're seeking to kind of be in a midst of our grief or in the midst of our challenges, we're seeking to hear these words and allow those words to speak a word of peace into our lives. And that is a gift. That's a great gift that goes along with this passage.

But today, what was what was what really laid on my heart is this passage is telling the story of God. God's character not just is not just a story about us and our need for God, but God's character and what we can count on. And that made me think about how this really is a passage of scripture that's best understood as a dance and a dance in particular- a waltz. And don't worry, I'm not going to be doing the dancing up here. You know, I want something that's memorable that would be beyond memorable. But I did ask our friends the Urmeys, who are ballroom dancers and trained ballroom dancers, if they wouldn't mind coming up here and just for a couple of minutes, improvisationally demonstrating for us a waltz. And I also asked our illustrious musician here. Yeah, I couldn't find another one. So, John, would you play? And he's being improvisational here as well. He's going to play a waltz. You're going to see that waltz demonstrated and I'm going to interrupt just a few moments into your dance. You keep dancing for a little bit with that? Do you have enough space here? I think we'll find out. Right. Okay. John, if you wouldn't mind. (Brent and Sandy Urmeys dance to a waltz on stage) So as they continue, I'm just going to narrate a little bit. I want you to notice a few things. Notice that as they started to dance, Brent took the first step and Sandy responded. Notice that there's a leader and a responder. A leader and a responder. Notice also, I mean, they're a little rusty by their own admission. That's the rawness of sometimes the dance of our relationship with God. Sometimes we're the ones who are watching our feet. And when we watch our feet and take our eyes off of our master, the leader, Jesus, in our metaphor, that's when we start tripping over ourselves. But when we just simply look into the eyes of the person who is our partner, it makes the dance really smooth. Sometimes when we begin dancing with the Lord, sometimes it's very awkward. But there's always a give and take. And if we trust the movement of the spirit, the spirit is going to take us into a journey that makes that the rhythm and the dance smoother and smoother the longer we do it. Thank you very much, guys. I won't put you through all of that. Beautiful. Thank you. This was they had just a moment to prepare for this request. And, so, thank you. And John. You know, he ought to do this professionally. I mean, goodness gracious.

So, when we when we look at the dance as the divine metaphor for Psalm 23, things begin to open up from my vantage point. I mean, this is a Psalm or song. David, King David, the guy who slayed Goliath, he became king of Israel he wrote this as a worship song. So fundamentally, this

this psalm is about God and it's about it's about the attributes of God as the leader. And if we swing into our metaphor for today, it's the story about a God who is leading us into a dance, and he's asking us to trust him, to trust him enough to keep our eyes fixed on him as he leads us in that dance. Now, it's when we if you're like me, I do this all the time, I get concerned about stepping on other people's toes what's going to happen if I step on God's toes? In other words, what's going to happen if I do something that offends God? I'm not trying to, but what happens when I do step on God's toes? So, I'm concerned I look down and when I take my eyes off of Jesus, that's when I begin to falter. That's actually when I begin to trip over myself. But when I stay into the groove, into the rhythm of the waltz, into the rhythm and I keep my eyes on my partner who is leading eventually things level out and everything becomes smooth. Now listen to these words. With that metaphor in mind.

The Lord is my shepherd. The Lord is my dance leader. *I'm going to lack nothing.* He makes me lie down in green pastures. Notice the phrase, He makes me lie down. He's the one who's taking care of me. I can trust that he's going to help me to lie down no matter what it is that I'm facing, no matter what brokenness that I'm experiencing in my life right now, no matter what struggle, no matter what addiction, no matter what life is doling out for me, I am going to trust that God's got me. He's got me. He's going to make me lie down in green pastures. *He leads me beside quiet waters.* He leads me in the dance. It leads me. *He refreshes my soul.* *He guides me along the right paths.* Get this- for his name's sake. What's that all about? So here what we're what we're learning is that in this psalm, we can trust we can trust God to be faithful because God's faithfulness and reputation are what's at stake. And God takes his reputation seriously. He takes his promises seriously.

Whenever there's a doubt, the doubt is on us. It's not on God. God can always be counted on to lead the dance. He's dancing even when we're taking our eyes off of him. And we're looking down and we're tripping over ourselves, when we're stepping on toes God is very confident on the dance floor of life. He's been doing it a long time. And so, God is continuing to dance in spite of the fact that we're tripping everything that's going on, in spite of our taking our eyes off of him. The dance continues, and he's constantly readjusting to keep us connected. Verse 4. *Even though I walk through the darkest valley.* Say that out loud with me, even though I walk through the darkest valley. Anybody here ever been through a dark valley? Thinking, metaphorically speaking you know what that feels like, right? But notice the two words, the very beginning of that sentence. Even though. Even though. I go through times when I don't know if I can even dance. Even though there are times when I can't even imagine getting on to the dance floor with God. Even though I may struggle with the whole concept of worshiping God when my life is falling apart, I can trust him. So *even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil.* Why? *Because God is with me. His rod and his staff.* There's those are the tools of a shepherd that the rod is a weapon. It's a weapon, and it's meant to ward off any threat that comes after the sheep. And the staff is one of those shepherds' crooks, it has a little hook on it, and that's meant that when I as a sheep, I'm straying, God uses that that staff to kind of remind me where I need to go. Bring me back to stay connected to the flock. God's faithfulness is inviting us to maintain the dance and he'll use whatever tools necessary. Tangible or intangible to keep us connected to him and to his body, the church in our case. Verse 5. *You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.* I just absolutely love that image. You know, I know with all of my heart and my experience that any time you introduce Jesus into a person, into a family, into a relationship of any kind, it's going to evoke a reaction. Because wherever Jesus is, Jesus demands a response. It's not like, you know, he's you got to choose. He does do that sometimes but his presence, his very presence, the presence

of love, divine Love, demands that we do something with it. So, Jesus is constantly inviting us to come on to the dance floor with him.

Many of us are wallflowers when it comes to going on to the deeper levels of discipleship. We're content to watch everybody else on the dance floor. Boy, doesn't that image just bring back? It brings me back to junior high. That was my very first school dance in junior high. Was incredible. I was scared out of my mind. Do you remember your first dance? I was so passionately in love with this girl who had no idea I existed. I had been infatuated with her since fourth grade. I watched every move that she made. And so, I stood there on the wall. I was I went to the dance with my buddies, and we stood there as wallflowers close to the to the gym teacher's office where the phone was just in case, I wanted to call home to get a ride back. And she was there dancing away on the floor and I stayed on the wall. And at one point I saw her look at me. And she came across the floor of this sweat socks, smelly gymnasium. Somehow, we thought the crepe paper streamers would make it smell better, but it didn't. She walked towards me. And I could feel my heart beating, strongly, wanting to come out of my chest. And she came right up to me, and she asked that question that I had longed for her to ask for so many years. She looked at me. She extended her hand to me. And she said, David. Would you dance? And I was like, I'll say yes and follow you to the ends of the earth. And she said, would you dance with my friend Jane? I think that everything inside of me screamed...No! But seeing her eyes and her outstretched hand, I put my hand in hers. And I said, Okay. And she stood me up and moved me to the dance floor where she connected me with her friend and her friend, and I danced. The very first time I ever danced. I had no idea what I was doing. And then we dance the next dance and then the next and then the next and the next and the next. And I realized that as I was learning how to dance in this moment of time, I was learning a lesson that was deeper. When that lesson impacted me, it was years later. Years later. When I was in high school that not only did, I learn how to dance but I knew who I was dancing for'

The invitation to the dance floor is what God is talking about here. Psalm 23 is all about who we're going to trust. And the trust that God is asking us to abide by is that even when we face those who are standing against us, our enemies, we can trust the God who's not scared. We can trust him to prepare a table in the presence of our enemies. What does that mean? It means that any time we are eating across the table from somebody who disagrees with us or who hates us, we can do so with confidence that our identity is not rooted in that person's hatred. But in the God who will make all things new. A restoration and healing and hope and forgiveness are the hallmarks of the character of the Great Shepherd. It is that great shepherd. Who calls us to the dance floor?

You anoint my head with oil, my cup overflows. The anointing is personal and corporate for David when he wrote these words. So, this is this is how they anointed kings. David, as a young teenager, was anointed to be king. They actually pour oil on your head to anoint you for royalty, for royal service. When I read this, you know, for four years, I would think that's about healing. And yes, to some degree, we anoint one another for healing, we use oil to anoint for healing and pray. Absolutely. But for David, this imagery is reminding us today that we are anointed also with royalty. In Jesus Christ when we say yes to what Jesus did on the cross, we become sisters and brothers with the Lord Himself, children of Almighty God, and the DNA of royal blood comes rushing into us, and we are anointed in ways that we cannot begin to imagine and the overflow of blessings that come from that identity in Christ are what keep me dancing even when I don't feel like it. Surely your goodness and love. Surely who's? God's, surely God's goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life. And I will dwell in the House of the Lord forever. That image of the

House of the Lord is really for David. It's the temple, the temple. And for him it was the tabernacle and the temple that his son Solomon would go on to build. This was designed. This was the heart of David. It was this design that Solomon, his son, would go on to build. The temple was known as the House of God. From the Old Testament prophets on even into the New Testament, what we hear God say is there's going to come a day when the temple, the physical temple won't be there anymore. But you're not going to need that, because I'm going to set up my residence inside of you. You will be my temple. Paul picks that up in First Corinthians. Our bodies, he says, do you not know? Our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit. God himself resides in us. That's why whether He knew it or not at that point, prophetically, David says, I will dwell in the House of the Lord forever because the Lord is dwelling inside of us. Do you know what gives us the capacity to dance? Especially when we don't know that we can. The Holy Spirit inside of us. Right now, somebody, whether on camera or in this room, whoever it was that submitted this and perhaps others, as you're facing life with uncertainties, whether, you know, whatever it is that you're dealing with, maybe, maybe some sense of brokenness or lawlessness or maybe you've been doubting, maybe you're searching for this God that that you heard about or that you've been learning about or maybe that you already knew was there, but you haven't experienced or felt this, God is inviting you to the dance floor. And he's asking you to leave the wall. And to step into the life that you have right now. And to take his hand and to trust him. To trust him to lead you. To trust him to lead you into the dance. He's not going to let you fall. He's not going to let you trip so badly. He'll help if you fall. If you trip, he's going to get you back up. He's going to provide for everything that you need. Just keep your eyes on him. Just keep your eyes on your dance partner. And soon everything is going to smooth out. And you'll dwell in the House of the Lord forever. You can trust him. Let's pray.

God, we thank you for the dance. And for being the one who leads us in the dance. Lord, forgive us for those times when we try to take leadership. When we are the ones who try to direct your steps rather than allow you to direct ours. Father, no matter what's going on keep her eyes fixed on Jesus and everything's going to be okay. We pray this in his precious name. Amen. Amen.