

## SPECIAL LESSON

### Psalm 23 (OSB 22): God as the Good Shepherd

#### Bible Study Preparation and Materials Needed:

Reflecting on: Psalm 23 (OSB 22) - God as the Good Shepherd

For the Lesson: Orthodox Study Bible or Holy Bible: Armenian Church Edition

*Recommended Orthodox Study Bible* [HERE](#).

*Recommended Holy Bible: Armenian Church Edition* [HERE](#).

#### *Optional Practice*

If time permits, begin or conclude this Bible study with an antiphonal Psalm reading. Have students read the psalm aloud in two groups, line by line. Encourage them to hear David's emotion, allowing it to become their own prayer.

#### Memory Verse:

*The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.  
He makes me to lie down in green pastures;  
He leads me beside the still waters.*

*- Psalm 23 (OSB 22) : 1-2*

## Bible Study Lesson

### Open with prayer:

Իմաստութիւն Յօր՝ Յիսուս, տո՛ւր ինձ իմաստութիւն, զբարիս խորհել եւ խօսել եւ գործել առաջի Քո՝ յամենայն ժամ. ի չար խորհրդոց, ի բանից եւ ի գործոց փրկեա՛ զիս. եւ ողորմեա՛ Քո արարածոց եւ ինձ բազմամեղիս: Ամէն

Eemasdootyoon Hor Heesoos, door eents eemasdootyoon uzparees khorel yev khosel yev kordz arachi ko hamenayn jham. Ee char khorhrtos, ee paneets yev kordzots prgya zees yev voghormya ko araradzots eents pazmameghees. Amen.

Wisdom of the Father, O Jesus, grant to me the wisdom to think, speak, and do that which is good in Your sight. Save me from all evil and distracting thoughts, words, and deeds. Have mercy upon your creatures and upon me, a great sinner. Amen.

## A Reflection on Psalm 23 (OSB Psalm 22): God as the Good Shepherd

### Psalm 23 (OSB 22)

*The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.*

*He makes me to lie down in green pastures;*

*He leads me beside the still waters.*

*He restores my soul; he leads me in the paths  
of righteousness for his name's sake.*

*Yea, 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 runs over.*

*Surely goodness and mercy*

*shall follow me all the days of my life;*

*and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.*

You're scrolling through social media at 2 AM, your mind racing with tomorrow's test, next week's drama, and that conversation you can't stop re-playing. Your phone battery is dying, but you can't put it down because the silence makes your anxiety worse. Everything feels chaotic, overwhelming, urgent. You're exhausted but can't sleep, busy but not productive, connected but lonely.

Sound familiar? We live in a world that never stops moving, never stops demanding, never stops comparing. Our hearts beat to the rhythm of notifications and deadlines. We're always running toward something or away from something, rarely just... being. We've forgotten what it feels like to be truly at rest.

In moments when we feel scattered, overwhelmed, and completely burned out, Psalm 23 speaks for us. It's not a psalm about sheep and pastures, it's about finding rest for your restless heart in the presence of God who knows exactly what you need. David doesn't offer us a productivity hack or a life coach strategy. He offers us something our generation desperately needs but rarely experiences: peace. Not the kind you have to earn or achieve, but the kind that comes from knowing someone bigger than your problems is taking care of everything you can't control.

This psalm gives us permission to exhale. It reminds us that we don't have to carry the weight of the world on our shoulders because we have a Shepherd who's already got it handled.

Let's be real. We're tired. Not just physically

tired, but soul tired. We're tired of trying to keep up with everyone else's highlight reels. We're tired of feeling like we're never doing enough, being enough, achieving enough. We're tired of the constant noise, the endless options, the pressure to have it all figured out.

But David shows us a different way to live. He starts with the most radical statement imaginable: *"I have everything I need."* Not because his circumstances are perfect, but because his Shepherd is perfect.

### ***"The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want."***

*The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.  
He makes me to lie down in green pastures;  
He leads me beside the still waters. He restores my soul;  
He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake. (1-3)*

In a world that constantly tells us we need more; more followers, more achievements, more stuff, more experiences. David says, *"Actually, I'm good."* This isn't about being content with less. It's about recognizing that when God is your Shepherd, you have access to everything that truly matters.

The anxiety that keeps you up at night? Your Shepherd is watching over you. The future you can't control? Your Shepherd already knows the way. The approval you're desperately seeking? Your Shepherd already delights in you.

St. Gregory of Nazianzus wrote, *"The Lord is my shepherd, and He shepherds me as His lamb; and being shepherded, I want for nothing."* The peace that comes from knowing you belong to God isn't passive. It's solid and profound.

**Q:** *What are some things you constantly feel like you "want" or need more of? How might seeing God as your Shepherd change that?*

### ***"He Makes Me Lie Down"***

*He makes me to lie down in green pastures;  
He leads me beside the still waters. (2)*

Notice that David doesn't say "I choose to rest". He says God "makes" him lie down. Sometimes God has to force us to stop because we've forgotten how. We're so addicted to busyness, so afraid of missing out, so convinced that our worth comes from our productivity, that we've lost the ability to just be still.

But God knows that rest isn't laziness, it's restoration. The "green pastures" aren't just pretty scenery; they're places of nourishment and safety. The "still waters" aren't just peaceful; they're life-giving. God doesn't just give us permission to rest; He creates the conditions for real peace.

In our world of constant noise and endless options, we've forgotten what stillness feels like. We fill every silence with music, every free moment with activity, every pause with our phones. But David describes a different kind of existence. It is the kind where rest is built into the rhythm of life because the Shepherd knows when His sheep need to stop and be restored.

St. John Chrysostom taught that *"God gives us rest not because we've earned it, but because we need it."* The green pastures aren't a reward for good sheep. They're a gift from a good Shepherd.

**Q:** *When was the last time you felt truly at rest? What makes it hard for you to be still?*

## ***“He Restores My Soul”***

*He restores my soul;  
He leads me in the paths  
of righteousness for His name’s sake. (3)*

This is the heart of the psalm. God doesn’t just give us a break. He gives us back ourselves. In Hebrew, “restores my soul” means to bring something back to its original condition. God takes our worn-out, stressed-out, burned-out souls and makes them new again.

We lose ourselves in so many ways. We lose ourselves trying to be who others expect us to be. We lose ourselves in comparison and competition. We lose ourselves in mistakes and regrets. But God specializes in restoration. He doesn’t just patch us up. He brings us back to who He created us to be.

The “paths of righteousness” aren’t about following a bunch of rules. They’re about walking in the way that leads to life. God guides us not to control us, but to protect us. He knows which paths lead to peace and which ones lead to destruction, and He loves us enough to guide us toward what’s truly good for us.

The phrase “for His name’s sake” reminds us that God’s reputation is tied to how well He cares for us. A good shepherd’s honor depends on the health of his flock. God isn’t just invested in our wellbeing because He’s nice, kind and trusting. God is invested because He loves us.

**Q:** *In what ways do you feel like you’ve “lost yourself”? What would it look like for God to restore your soul?*

## ***“Through the Valley of the Shadow”***

*Yea, 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. (4)*

David doesn’t say “if I walk through dark valleys”. Instead he says “though I walk through.” He knows that difficult seasons are part of life, not exceptions to it. But here’s what changes everything: he’s not walking alone.

The “valley of the shadow of death” represents all the dark places we have to walk through — loss, betrayal, failure, sickness, depression, anxiety. These valleys are real, and they’re scary. But they’re also temporary. You walk “through” them, not “into” them permanently.

What makes the difference is presence. “You are with me.” Not “You will rescue me from this” or “You will make this go away,” but “You are with me in this.” Sometimes the greatest comfort isn’t the promise that our problems will disappear, but the assurance that we won’t face them alone.

The rod and staff aren’t weapons of punishment. They’re tools of protection and guidance. The shepherd uses them to fight off predators and to guide sheep back to safety. Even in the darkest moments, God is actively working to protect us and lead us home.

St. Athanasius wrote, “*Even when we walk through darkness, the light of Christ walks with us, and darkness cannot overcome it.*” The valley might be dark, but the Shepherd brings His own light.

**Q:** *What “valleys” are you walking through right now? How does it change things to know you’re not walking alone?*

## ***“You Prepare a Table”***

*You prepare a table before me  
in the presence of my enemies;  
You anoint my head with oil;  
my cup runs over. (5)*

This image shifts from pastoral to royal. God isn't just a Shepherd now, He's a Host throwing a feast in our honor. And here's the amazing part: He does it while our enemies are watching. God doesn't wait for our problems to disappear before He blesses us. He blesses us in full view of everything that's trying to destroy us.

The anointing with oil represents honor and consecration. In ancient times, one anointed kings and priests. These were people set apart for special purposes. God is saying, *“You're not just surviving. You're being honored. You're not just getting by, you're being celebrated.”*

*“My cup runs over”* means abundance. Not just enough, but more than enough. God doesn't give us the bare minimum to get by. He gives us overflow of joy that spills into other people's lives, peace that others can't explain, hope that multiplies when it's shared.

This doesn't mean life becomes problem-free. The enemy are still there, watching. But it does mean that God's blessings are bigger than our battles. His goodness is more powerful than our struggles.

**Q:** *How have you experienced God's blessings even during difficult times? What does it mean to you that God honors you “in the presence of your enemies”?*

## ***“Goodness and Mercy Shall Follow Me”***

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

David ends with certainty: *“Surely.”* After walking through valleys and sitting at tables surrounded by enemies, he's absolutely convinced of God's faithfulness. Goodness and mercy aren't just occasional visits from God. They're following him everywhere he goes. They are a part of his life.

In Hebrew, the word *“follow”* is actually more aggressive than it sounds in English. It means to pursue relentlessly, to chase down, to hunt. God's goodness and mercy aren't casual companions, they're determined pursuers. Even when we run from God, His love is chasing after us.

The *“house of the Lord”* isn't just about heaven someday. It's about living in God's presence always. When God is your Shepherd, every place becomes a sanctuary, every moment becomes an opportunity for worship, every day becomes a gift.

St. Cyril of Alexandria taught that *“dwelling in the house of the Lord”* means living with the constant awareness that we belong to God and He belongs to us. It's not about location but about relationship.

The psalm that began with *“I shall not want”* ends with *“I will dwell... forever.”* From contentment to eternity, from rest to relationship, from peace to permanence. This is what happens when we truly understand that God is our Shepherd.

**Q:** *How does it change your perspective to think of God's goodness and mercy as actively chasing after you? What does “dwelling in the house of the Lord” look like in your daily life?*

Yet again, Psalm 23 isn't just poetry. It's a prescription for anxiety, a remedy for restlessness, and a blueprint for peace. In a world that tells us to hustle harder, achieve more, and never be satisfied, David shows us a different way to live: trusting that our Shepherd knows what we need better than we do.

The peace David describes isn't something we have to create or maintain through our own effort. It's something we receive by recognizing who God is and who we are in relationship to Him. We are His sheep, and He is our Shepherd. We are His guests, and He is our Host. We are His children, and He is our Father.

When your heart is restless, when your mind is racing, when your soul feels depleted, remember: you have a Shepherd who knows your name, who knows your needs, and who will never stop pursuing you with goodness and mercy. You don't have to earn rest, you just have to receive it. You don't have to find peace, you just have to trust the One who gives you peace, who IS your peace.

**Close with prayer:**

Պահապան ամենայնի Քրիստոս, աջ Քո հովանի լիցի ի վերայ իմ, ի տուէ եւ ի գիշերի, ի նստիլ ի տան, ի գնալ ի ճանապարհ, ի ննջել եւ ի յառնել, զի մի երբեք սասանեցայց եւ ողորմեա՛ Քո արարածոց եւ ինձ բազմամեղիս: Ամէն

Bahaban amenayn Kreesdos, ach Ko hovanee leetsee ee vera eem; ee dveh yev ee keesheree, ee nsdeel ee dan, ee knal ee janabarh, ee nunchel yev ee harnel, zee mee yerpek sasanetsayts yev voghormya Ko araradzots yev eents pazmamyghees. Amen.

O Christ, guardian of all, let Your right hand guard and shelter me, by day and by night, at home and abroad, in sleeping and in waking, that I may never stumble. Have mercy upon Your creatures and upon me, a great sinner. Amen.