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## SERMON RECAP: WHAT DID THE TEXT MEAN? WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

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When we are overloaded in life, we must learn how to accept and rejoice in the love and goodness of God. What did you learn from this week's message that you'd like to share or discuss with the group?

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## WARM UP

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How have you experienced God's goodness and love in your life this week?

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## THE TEXT: WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR ME?

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Have 2-3 different people read Psalm 23, if possible from different translations.

This psalm is full of assurances of God's goodness.

Name some of the ways David sees God's goodness visiting him in this psalm.

All of these blessings depend on this one fact: The Lord is his Shepherd.

What does it mean that the Lord is our Shepherd?

- How are our lives different from those of other people because we allow the Lord to lead us like a shepherd?
- What are some specific ways a person with the Lord as his Shepherd will live his or her life differently from others?

Have 3-4 different people read verse 6a, (ends with "the days of my life") in different translations.

What are the two blessings mentioned by the psalmist in this first part of verse 6?

Think for a moment about what "goodness" might look like in the life of a genuinely committed believer.

Before you answer this question, consider what the Hebrew word "goodness" can mean.

It can mean that which is: joyous, pleasing, desirable, orderly, usable, lovely, friendly, kind, and good.

What kind of life is promised here—a life of material blessing or a life of internal blessing?

- Do you know anyone whose life is like this?
- Does he or she seem content?
- Is that level of contentedness available to the rest of us as well?
- On what basis?

We've looked at the word "goodness," so let's move now to the phrase "faithful love."

This term is more involved than the word "goodness."

It can mean simply having mercy on someone, or being kind to someone.

Sometimes it is translated "kindness," "lovingkindness," "mercy," or simply "love."

It literally means "covenant love," so this kind of love is reserved only for those who are in a covenant of some kind.

It refers to an extreme level of commitment that cannot be experienced outside of the covenant.

This kind of love is the basis for the favor God grants to those who love Him.

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Now, let's go back to our primary passage and look at something else that is very reassuring.

- What does David say that the Lord's goodness and covenant love will do?
- Who is causing the action here—David or God?
- Can you think of a time when you didn't expect God's blessing, you weren't looking for it, but it surprised you anyway?

Now, picture yourself living a life where you don't have to pursue success, but you simply receive God's favor as he sends it. Some people, if they really believed this kind of life was possible, would be willing to give up anything for it.

Have someone read Matthew 13:46.

Now, back to our main passage.

The second half of verse 6 says: "And I will dwell in the house of the Lord as long as I live."

The final blessing David mentions is that he will dwell in the house of the Lord the rest of his life.

Here, David is referring to the Temple as a symbol of God's presence.

To be in the house of the Lord was to be in God's presence.

The Temple was a place of order, of retreat from the outside world, of peace and harmony.

The New Testament teaches that believers carry God's presence with them, in the form of God's Holy Spirit.

Picture a life like this—carrying God's presence and peace wherever you go.

- Is this kind of life the rule or the exception for you?
- Is there anything that prevents this kind of life from being reality for you?

Unfortunately, many of us miss these kinds of blessings because our lives are so fast-paced and so demanding that, if God blessing us, we are almost too busy to notice. It is to people like that—to those who are overloaded—that Jesus calls out:

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."

- What are some of the kinds of things we lay on ourselves that crowd the Shepherd out of our lives?
- What are some of the responsibilities you have taken on that make the possibility of experiencing God's goodness and covenant love more remote?
- What kinds of demands are presently being made of you that you would like to be freed from?

You may remember a line from the sermon a couple of weeks ago that refers to a person who "will destroy himself running for a finish line that doesn't exist."

Do you feel that way a lot of the time?

If so, ask yourself, "What is God calling me to give up in order to trade a life of continual pursuit for a life of continually *being pursued* by God's blessings?"

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## DIGGING DEEPER

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Either in your group time or on your own, look up Deuteronomy 28:1-14, and especially verses 1-2.

If the condition of blessing in Psalm 23 is making the Lord our shepherd, what is the condition in this passage?

Ask God to give you a heart to obey and follow Him diligently in all you do.

How do these passages add to what we have learned about God's blessings pursuing and overtaking us?

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## CLOSING THOUGHT

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We often hesitate to release things that we have been pursuing so hard.

At times, we can even be afraid, but there is no need to be.

If God is calling you to release a life of pursuing a finish line that never appears in order to be pursued by His blessings, you can move forward with confidence and say with the psalmist:

"The Lord is my shepherd. God's goodness, His covenant love and His presence are with me. I lack *nothing!*"