

# BELPRES CHURCH

## All Together Now

### Psalm 23

Speaker: Annie Duncan

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Well, good morning. Good morning to everybody in the room and good morning if you are worshipping online. My name's Annie Duncan, I'm the Executive Pastor here and it is always wonderful to be with you in worship. As some of you may see, I have a new fashion accessory, this boot here, and I've been calling it my sermon illustration because my Achilles tendon is taking a one-month sabbatical right now. And we are really hoping that after a month, it gets some healing and some restoration, which I'm going to segue. We are in a sermon series called Restore. So that's the sermon illustration. Got it? We're in a sermon series called Restore where we're looking at this command to remember and observe Sabbath, which is one of the ways that Jesus restores us. And Scott Dudley has been defining Sabbath this way. "Sabbath is connecting with God, people who point us to Jesus and things we delight in to be restored to mental, emotional and spiritual strength."

And as we've been walking through this series each week, we've been giving you a different action step. So for the first two weeks we said prepare. No really, prepare because we're going to practice Sabbath together as a community. And then three weeks ago, the action step was to stop, stop your work, stop chores, which a lot of students were really excited about that, stopping chores, stop screen time and set the day aside for Sabbath. Two weeks ago, the action step was to rest on Sabbath. Sleep in, go to bed early, take a nap, get outside and find rest for your weary souls. And then last week the action step was to delight. Do something on Sabbath that brings you joy. And this week I'm giving you the action step at the front end of the sermon because they all build off of each other. So this week the action step is to worship.

And worship isn't so much the last action step that we check the box on for Sabbath, but it is where all of the action steps come together. We respond with worship. So on Sabbath, we stop and set the day aside so that we can find rest and delight in God, and

the response is worship. When we do those things, we can't help but respond to God in gratitude.

So how do we define worship? What is worship? Well, we're currently in a worship service. This is one way that you can define worship is when we corporately gather together for a service like this. But worship, the word worship, is so much more than that. It captures so much more than that. The word worship is a verb, which means it can be a physical action like singing, it can also be a mental action like praying or a state of being, like resting in God's presence. But even those, singing songs and praying and resting in God's presence are examples of things that we do in worship, worship is actually what happens to us when we worship. And this is the reason why worship is so powerful because as we come to God in adoration and praise, whether we're by ourselves or whether we're gathered in community like this, God speaks to us. God speaks to us through the scripture being read, through the songs that we sing, through the community that we're gathered in.

And we might do things in worship, but God happens to us in worship. And when we follow God's commands and set a day aside and remember and observe Sabbath and take time to stop and rest and delight and worship, God also happens to us in Sabbath. During our Sabbath, we meet face-to-face with the God of Creation. And we're transformed because just like in worship, Sabbath isn't so much something that we do as it is what God does to us. So on Sabbath, I'm going to repeat this over and over again. This is my one point in the entire sermon. On Sabbath, we stop and set the day aside so that we can find rest and delight in God and the response is worship.

So this morning as we continue to learn what it means to practice Sabbath and what worship means, we're going to walk through Psalm 23. Psalm 23 might be really familiar to you or it might be the first time that you're hearing these words. So here's Psalm 23. "The Lord is my shepherd. I lack nothing. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside quiet waters. He refreshes my soul. He guides me along the right paths for His name's sake. Even though I walk through the darkest valley, 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 overflows. Surely your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever."

So King David wrote Psalm 23. And if you know anything about King David, he was a worshiper. He was a worshiper of the Lord. And it's clear that, especially in the Psalm that we just read, King David is talking about someone that he knows really well. David isn't writing about the Lord as someone that he's loosely acquainted with, but this is an intimate Psalm. David knows the shepherd. David has followed the shepherd for a long time. And that's why David can write this verse one which says, "The Lord is my shepherd. I lack nothing." Another way to translate that is, "The Lord is my shepherd, and

that is enough." David doesn't arrive at this statement lightly, but again, it's a statement of praise and worship because that's taken time for him to come, to see, and know that the Lord is enough.

We live in a society here where enough is never enough. On our phones, we see thousands of ads per day and none of them say, "Hey, what you have is enough. Don't be tempted to click on this and buy this." We're constantly bombarded by, "Hey, that new thing that you have, you can get a newer one if you just click this button." We need new things to replace the things we already have. But on Sabbath, we are invited to stop. And like David writes, "We don't stop for the sake of stopping" but we stop so that we can look to the Lord and say, "Lord, you are enough." When we stop, it's one of the very first acts that we do in worship. It gets us in a better posture where we can fix our eyes on Jesus because we all know, or maybe we have a friend that we know, we know what it's like to experience multitasking in worship, and the temptation is real if you are worshipping at home.

Some of you may be folding the laundry right now and being like, "I'm worshipping the Lord." You're multitasking and worshipping, so thank you for worshipping. But that temptation is real. But when we stop, when we stop folding the laundry, when we stop our work, when we stop our scrolling, we fix our eyes on Jesus and we enter into a powerful state of worship. The act of stopping is acknowledging, "Okay, Lord, you are enough. You are enough." And that doesn't mean that we have everything that we want, but it recognizes the value of what we already have. So on Sabbath, we stop and set the day aside so that we can find rest and delight in God and the response is worship.

And in John 15, Jesus calls himself the Good Shepherd and all who would've heard him call himself the Good Shepherd, they would've been reminded of Psalm 23. So in John 15, Jesus is saying, "Hey, you know that familiar Psalm that you've read and memorized? Well, that's me. I'm the Good Shepherd. Follow me." And the more we follow the Good Shepherd and follow Jesus, the less we need to be convinced that Jesus is enough. Because we experience firsthand that, wow, Jesus, you are enough.

A few years back, Pastor Alexis and I were at a worship service right here in the community center, and throughout the evening, both Pastor Alexis and myself were invited to pray. And I went before Pastor Alexis, which you always want to do, you want to go before him, and especially because of what happens after. So I prayed and my prayer sounded like this. "Jesus, give us more of you. Jesus, give us more of your love. Jesus, give us more of your peace." And that's not a bad prayer to pray at all, but it definitely reflects my maybe Bellevue consumerism mentality of just asking for more from God.

So then later on, Pastor Alexis prayed, and my meaningful tears are going to come out right here because this was his prayer. "Jesus, you are enough." And that was it. He just

stood up here and prayed that one line. "Jesus, you are enough." And I don't know, this gets to worship. Because I don't know if you've ever experienced a moment in worship where you're like, whew, you're arrested. You stop and you experience God in a whole new way. And that wasn't just me. I mean, this was years ago. But I remember it like it was today because I experienced God in a new and powerful way, and the whole community center did. I mean, the spirit was thick in the room. "Jesus, you're enough."

"The Lord is my shepherd and that is enough." So when we practice this practice of stopping, we recognize that that is Jesus, that is the God that we serve. It's saying to God, "Okay, for 24 hours, I can stop my work because Jesus, you're enough. For 24 hours, I can stop being on my phone a ton because Jesus, I actually believe that you're enough." And when we get to that stopping point, as we continue reading in Psalm 23, where is the very first place that the Good Shepherd takes us? In verse two and three, it says, "He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside quiet waters. He refreshes my soul. He guides me along the right paths for his name's sake." The very first place that the Good Shepherd takes us is to rest. On Sabbath, we stop and we set the day aside so that we can find rest and delight in God. And the response is worship.

And I love the language that King David uses here. "He makes me lie down." It's as if the shepherd knows better than we do. And what we need the most is a nap. And so the shepherd puts us down, he puts us down for a nap. The shepherd knows what lies ahead, all that's coming. And so the very first thing that the shepherd has us do is rest. And I love that. But rest, rest is one of the things that we resist the most. "Oh, I'll rest when I'm on that vacation in three months. I'll rest then." What? No.

A few weeks ago, Scott said that Sabbath is one of the only 10 Commandments that we proudly break. Like, "Oh, I'm just too busy. I'll Sabbath when I get to it later." But don't steal, don't murder, don't commit adultery. We would never brag about those, if we are breaking them, and I hope nobody is. If you are, come for prayer afterwards. But breaking Sabbath, "Oh, I'm so busy." We brag about this. We brag about our overly busy and hurried schedules, and maybe that's why Sabbath is the only one of the 10 Commandments that God gives a why to. All of the other commandments, they're just short little statements. Don't murder, don't steal. It's because they're self-explanatory. They make sense. But Sabbath, God goes at length to tell us why, why we are to do this.

In Exodus 20, it says, "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days, you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath day to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work for in six days, the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, but He rested on the seventh day. Therefore, the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy." So why do we practice Sabbath and Sabbath rest? Because God rested. God set that day aside and called it holy. Was God actually tired? Was he burnt out after all of the creating that he was doing? Scripture doesn't say. But in resting, he modeled for all of us what it looks like to stop and rest. And

in doing so, God builds this rhythm of rest into our original design, how he created us to be.

So how do rest and worship go together? I'm not saying that we can all sleep through a worship service. But on Sabbath, we stop and set the day aside so that we can find rest and delight in God. And the response is worship. We can't go hard for multiple days or weeks in a row without breaking down. And so we are invited to rest. Rest in God's presence, find rest for our souls. And because this invitation to rest comes from the Good Shepherd, we can't help but respond to God in gratitude and worship, saying, "Thank you, God. Thank you that you actually created us to need rest. Thank you that you've called us to obey this command, to set us a day aside to find rest." And when I take time to stop and calm down the chaos from my regular week, that's when I can hear the voice of the Good Shepherd more clearly. That's when I can connect with God's presence and hear that voice and follow that voice more clearly. It puts me in a posture of adoration.

So on Sabbath, we stop and set the day aside so that we can find rest and delight in God. And the response is worship. So let's keep reading Psalm 23, and where King David takes us to find some delight. It says, "Even though I walk through the darkest valley, 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 and my cup overflows." Wait a second, dark valleys and dinner with my enemies. That's delight? I think it is. So bear with me. Hold on. Practicing delight on Sabbath, it's not tone-deaf to everything else that we have going on, but it's quite the opposite.

Practicing delight on Sabbath takes into account all that we have going on, and it recognizes Jesus' presence with us in the midst of all of that. Up until this point, the psalmist is writing about the Lord, the shepherd in third person, refers to the shepherd as He and the Lord. But here it switches to you. Here is the part in the Psalm where it gets personal. "I will fear no evil for you are with me." When we take time to slow down and stop and rest, we can better experience true delight in Jesus because we recognize, "Wow, you're with me, you're with here year." We're not stuck in the dark valley, but we realize Jesus is walking with us through it.

So last week, someone that my husband works with was tragically killed. So it was a really, really hard week for him and a lot of his coworkers. And as my husband and I talked about preparing for Sabbath, he said, "I really want to slow cook a pork shoulder all day." And he loves slow food. That's something he delights in. I delight in it because I get to eat it. So we delighted and feasted on Sabbath sandwiches because we made some Cuban sandwiches even in the midst of a hard week. And I think that's what King David is getting at here when he says, "You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies." In the presence of tragedy and the presence of hardship, in the presence of sadness, Jesus says to us, "Yep, even there, let's sit down. Let's feast together. We can experience the delight from the Good Shepherd even in the midst of the hardship." And I

think that's why in our stopping, our resting and delighting, we can't help but exclaim worship. We can't help but respond in worship.

So on Sabbath, we stop, set the day aside, find rest and delight in God. And the response is worship. Psalm 23. It ends with saying, "Surely your goodness in love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever." As we've read through this entire psalm now, it makes sense why David is so convinced of the goodness and love that will fill his life because of everything that's preceded this last line. It's as if David is saying in this last line, "Do you see the shepherd? Do you see what the shepherd does? Do you see how the shepherd provides? Do you see how the shepherd is with us?" I can't help but say, "Yeah, goodness and love, they're going to follow me because look at the testimony of the shepherd in my life."

David doesn't end this psalm of praise in order to earn love. But David ends this psalm of praise this way because it's a response to all that the shepherd has done for him. And similarly, when we come to God and worship, we don't worship to earn Jesus' love. We worship as a response to Jesus' love.

So putting these four elements of Sabbath together, stop, rest, delight, and worship, it's not complicated, but it does take practice. It has to be intentional. Sabbath is not just going to happen. "Whoops, I'm Sabbath-ing. Oh, how did that happen?" No, you have to be intentional about it. But like worship isn't just something that we do, but God does to us, the same goes with Sabbath. And so I'm going to close with a really simple practical example of something I've been doing on Sabbath, and it's a simple thing, so I'm hoping that's hopeful to you. But it's been very transformative, powerfully transformative. So here's my example. On Sabbath, I walk my dog differently. During the week, and this is pre-boot and everything, so I'm not walking around with this boot.

But on Sabbath, I walk my dog differently. On days that aren't Sabbath, we've got this four-mile loop that I take my dog on. I know exactly how long it's going to take me. I put in earbuds and usually listening to a book or a podcast, some kind of information that I'm taking in. But on Sabbath, I leash up my dog and we venture out to find a different trail to blaze. We don't have an agenda, so we don't have to be back by a certain time. I leave my earbuds at home because I just want to listen to the birds of the air.

A practice for me on Sabbath is solitude. I don't spend a lot of time in solitude, but I'm learning to. And we just walk and we delight in God's creation. And because I'm not listening to anything, and as I'm being in solitude, I find myself praying, praying to God, praying over my family, praying over my friends. And even a couple of weeks ago, I started singing, singing worship songs as I'm walking my dog. So not only am I the crazy dog lady, but I'm the crazy singing dog lady. But I love it. I love it. I have so much fun, and it's so restorative.

Now, why is this simple way of me walking the dog differently on Sabbath? Why is that so powerfully transformative? Well, because it's starting to impact the other days of my week. I'm starting to crave that time of solitude and worship and prayer with God. I'm not wanting to be as hurried when I'm walking my dog. It's starting to transform the other days of the week. And this is why this command to Sabbath is so powerful, because it's not just about the one day, it's about how God is transforming us as beings. This is why Walter Brueggemann says, "That people that keep Sabbath live all seven days differently." We prepare for Sabbath, we set the day aside, and then we live off the fruits of Sabbath because of what God has done in us. On Sabbath, we stop. We set the day aside so that we can find rest and delight in God, and the response is worship.

So this week, Bell Press as you practice Sabbath, practice worship, look for ways on your day that you're setting aside. And maybe it's not a full 24 hours yet, that's okay. But look for ways that you can be in worship and put all four of these action steps together because they all put us in a posture of worship. Stop, rest, delight and worship. Ask yourself on Sabbath, does this bring me closer to Jesus? Does this give me access to God's beauty and wonder? Follow the Good Shepherd and listen to His voice so that we, like King David can say, "Surely, God, your love and mercy will follow me all the days of my life." So God, we thank you for this command to set a day aside. God, thank you that we are learning more about how to be your followers. Jesus, that we can be more like you. So help us to hear your voice more clearly. God, thank you for the invitation to stop, rest, delight, and worship you. We love you God. Amen.

### **Discussion Questions:**

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*Read this week's scripture(s) & answer the below questions with your friends, family, or All In small group.*

**Opening Question:** Looking back to last week's sermon and scripture... How did you live differently or practice what we talked about in your life this week? What did you do and how did it go?

**Scripture Reflection Questions:** Read this week's scripture together and discuss the following (note: we use the same scripture reflection questions each week so that we can practice using the same tools over time as we examine different scriptures):

- What do we learn about God (e.g., traits, personality, what matters, priorities) in this passage?
- What do we learn about people, and ourselves in particular, this week?

**Sermon Reflection Questions:** Reflecting on this week's sermon, discuss the following:

- What does it look like to be so content in God that you can say, “The Lord is my Shepherd, and that is enough”?
- How have you encountered God’s nearness while walking through a “dark valley?”

**Closing Question and Application:** Given what we’ve discussed together today, how might God want you to apply these learnings to your life or in the life of your community this next week? Who might you share this with?

**Closing group prayer:** Spend a few minutes together in your group sharing prayer requests and then praying together for each other. Thank God for the time together, the conversation shared, the other people in the group, and for encouragement in the week ahead.

**This week’s Sabbath practice: WORSHIP**

**What’s one way you will worship during sabbath?**

- Corporate Singing – Join in person worship or invite others online with you.
- Serve others by making their day easier.
- Be extra generous as you encounter others throughout the day.