

## I Shall Not Want

One school day in 1978 my father woke me up and brought me downstairs. He told me to look out the window. He asked me, "What do you see?" All I could see was snow, lots and lots of snow! My father said, "Somewhere out there is my car. After breakfast, get dressed and go out and find it." My father had a 1972 hard top Ford Mustang. It was lost in the driveway. The blizzard of 1972 had covered it up as well as shut down the entire city. No school! For a week! My mother organized a board game marathon. We read books. We played in the snow. Eventually we found and shoveled out my dad's car as well as the driveway. I don't remember being sad, frightened or worried during that week.

It is easy to get discouraged, afraid or even complain during these present circumstances. King David has a word for us during these times we find ourselves in now. It is found in Psalm 23. **Psalm 23:1 (GW)** <sup>1</sup> The LORD is my shepherd. **I am never in need.** You may know the last part as "I shall not want." What does it mean to be not in need or want? Some may think it means to have enough. But the reality is that it means to be content. Be content with what God has given you. Too many of us spend our times thinking and complaining about what we don't have instead of being grateful for what we do have. How would life be for you today and during the rest of this pandemic (and beyond) if you thanked God for what you do have and stopped thinking about what you don't?

Here are some Bible verses and questions to help you in your contentment:

### Read **Psalm 131**

According to this, what is the secret of contentment?

### Read **Philippians 4:10-14**

According to this, what is the secret of contentment?

### Read **1 Timothy 6:3-12**

According to this, what is the secret of contentment?

Try this today: Put away your cellphones, iPads, computers. Spend time together as a family. Talk about what you are thankful for. Talk about the ways God, our Good Shepherd, has blessed you in the past and is blessing you now. Why not dust off a few board games, deck of cards or a jigsaw puzzle and just enjoy playing together?

## He Makes Me Lie Down

### Psalm 23:2 (GW)

<sup>2</sup> **He makes me lie down in green pastures.** He leads me beside peaceful waters.

Who likes to be made to do anything? Want to see someone flex their muscles and arch their back? Tell them they have no choice, they must. So why does Jesus our Good Shepherd, make us lie down?

Our grandson, Elijah, is now four months old. Annette and I love taking care of him. He loves being around his aunts, uncles and grandparents. Sometimes he starts to rub his eyes and gets fussy. But he refuses to go to sleep. He doesn't want to miss anything. Naps are important for a four-month-old. When he gets that way, grandpa steps in. I hold him firmly and begin walking around the house. Soon his little eyes shut, and I can lay him down in his crib. In a way, I make him go to sleep. I do this because I love him. I do this because I know that he needs his nap time. Nap time keeps him healthy and happy.

Just because I am a grown up does not mean that I act any differently. Jesus wants me to do something, but I want to do something else because I think I might miss out. Jesus then needs to step in and make me lie down for my own good. Making me lie down stops me in my tracks. It gets my attention. It enables me to experience the rest of verse 2 as well as verse 3 of Psalm 23. **Psalm 23:2b-3 (GW)** *He leads me beside peaceful waters. <sup>3</sup> He renews my soul. He guides me along the paths of righteousness for the sake of his name.*

Sometimes it is the laying down that opens my eyes to see what I have neglected. That was the case for the Children of Israel in the northern kingdom. King Ahab and his Jezebel led the northern kingdom away from God. They encouraged the worship of false gods, idols. God sent the prophet Elijah to them to get their attention. Elijah told them that there would be neither rain nor dew on the land until God told Elijah to bring rain. After almost three years of draught, Elijah returns. He invites the 450 prophets of Ball to a showdown on Mount Carmel. The turning point happens in **1 Kings 18:30 (GW)** <sup>30</sup> Then Elijah said to all the people, "Come over here." So, all the people came to him. **He rebuilt the LORD'S altar that had been torn down.**

What if God is trying to make us lie down to get our attention and point out something important to us? Sporting events are cancelled. Large gatherings are cancelled. People are afraid to go out in public. What if the turning point is the rebuilding of the family altar? People used to have an altar in their homes. A set place where they would gather to read the Bible and pray together. Now our family gathering place is a screen that is tuned in to Netflix, YouTube or Facebook. What would happen if tonight (or another time during the day) you gathered your household together and said, "We are going to read the Bible and pray together." What if we, as the people of God began to rebuild the family altars of God? Haven't we let these altars lay in disrepair long enough? If the Lord is our Shepherd, let us lie down in the green pastures of His Word as a family. Not just on Sunday, but everyday at our family altar!

If you need some help on how to do family devotions, just e-mail me and I will be happy to tell you what we do as a family and give you some suggestions.

## Beside Peaceful Waters

### Psalm 23:2 (GW)

<sup>2</sup> He makes me lie down in green pastures. **He leads me beside peaceful waters.**

Have you ever sat down by still or peaceful waters? What do you see? The waters are clear. You can see the bottom. But you see more than that. One of my desk top computer's opening screen pictures is a beautiful mountain lake. The water is still. The mountains and the blue sky are reflected on the surface of the waters.

One reason that our Good Shepherd Jesus leads beside peaceful waters is to give us a time to reflect. Reflect on what we see in the waters. Reflect on ourselves. Are we the person we want to be? Better yet, are we the person that Jesus wants us to be? As we reflect on ourselves, it is not just the outward appearance we are to look at. We are to get the bottom of the matter. Do our motives line up with God's? We pray "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." But do we truly mean it? Can we say with Jesus, "Not my will but thy will be done."? As we reflect on ourselves, it should point out our flaws. We should see our sin. Our reflection should be like Nathan when he confronted David over Bathsheba, "You are the man!" As we reflect on ourselves, we see our need for something greater than ourselves. We see our need for savior. Slowly the shape of what is behind us comes into focus as we take our focus of ourselves. Then we can say like Pilate, "Behold, the Man!" We look to Jesus, our Good Shepherd who has led us to these waters. He is the one who washes us white as snow in the peace giving waters that flowed from his pierced side. These are the waters of peace. These are the waters that have made peace between God and us.

It is our Good Shepherd who leads us to this place of reflection. He shows us our need. He fills the need. He equips us as He leads us on to a new life of living as His little lamb each and every day!

## He Restores My Soul

**Psalm 23:3 (ESV)** <sup>3</sup> **He restores my soul.** He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

It is said that John Wesley used to ask people, "How is it with your soul?" We are used to asking, "How are you?" The responses we get are based on the feelings of the moment. But to ask about the state of a person's soul requires a deeper and more thoughtful answer. Your soul is more important than your physical body. **Matthew 5:29-30 (GW)** <sup>29</sup> *"So if your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose a part of your body than to have all of it thrown into hell."* <sup>30</sup> *And if your right hand leads you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose a part of your body than to have all of it go into hell."* **Matthew 10:28 (GW)** <sup>28</sup> *Don't be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Instead, fear the one who can destroy both body and soul in hell.*

So how is it with your soul? The state of your soul is not dependent on your outward circumstances. Instead it is dependent on your relationship with God. Sin destroys that

relationship. It also destroys your soul. Each time you and I sin it is like chipping away at a part of our soul. That is why I really like how the ESV translates Psalm 23:3a. **He restores my soul.** Has your car ever been in a bad accident? Pieces are everywhere. Metal is crumpled. Things are broken. Your car gets sent to a body shop. There it is restored. The missing is replaced, the broken is fixed, the marred is made beautiful. That is what Jesus our Good Shepherd does for us. He is the one who restores our soul. He comes with his grace and mercy and loves us to soul health. He takes the sin stained ugliness of our souls and makes them beautiful.

That is why Horatio Spafford could write these famous lines after experiencing so much pain and suffering:

*When peace like a river, attendeth my way,  
When sorrows like sea billows roll;  
Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to know  
It is well, it is well, with my soul.*

Outwardly he was suffering and grieving the loss of family members. But inwardly his soul was well. Why? Because Jesus the Good Shepherd restores souls!

So how is it with your soul today?

### **Along the Paths of Righteousness**

#### **Psalm 23:3 (GW)**

<sup>3</sup> He renews my soul. **He guides me along the paths of righteousness** for the sake of his name.

What is a path of righteousness? It is the right way to go. I have a GPS on my phone. I use it when I don't know where I am going. Sometimes neither does my GPS! Our family was at a soccer tournament in another part of the state. We were at a new outdoor sports complex. We were staying at a nearby hotel. We got done with soccer for the day and wanted to go to the hotel and check in. I typed the address in my GPS, and we were off. We went around the block and ended up where we started. One of our passengers said, "There is the hotel across the street." Had I continued to trust my GPS we would still be circling the same block. Our Good Shepherd, Jesus, leads us in the right way to go. Too often we lag behind or wander off the path of righteousness. That is called sin. When a sheep gets lost, it gets scared. It usually stays in place unable to move. Our Good Shepherd does not leave us behind. HE comes looking for us. He calls us by name. He leads us back onto the path of righteousness.

How do we know what the path of righteousness is? The closer we stay by the Good Shepherd, the easier it will be. Spending time reading, meditating and memorizing God's Word is how we draw close to the Good Shepherd. Spending time in prayer and praise is how we stay close to the Good Shepherd.

#### **Psalm 23:3 (GW)**

<sup>3</sup> He renews my soul. He guides me along the paths of righteousness **for the sake of his name.**

When we stay close the Good Shepherd, we stay on the paths of righteousness. We do the things that please God. We are living according to God's will. We are bringing glory to God's name! I have nine children. When any of my children are out in public, people see them. They see what they do. They know that these are Pastor Jim's kids. If they are doing bad things, it brings shame to my name. If they do good things it brings honor to my name. That is how it is with us and Jesus. At Baptism Jesus writes His name upon us. How we live will either bring shame or glory to Jesus. As our Good Shepherd, Jesus leads us on the paths of righteousness so that we will bring glory to His name. As Jesus leads us in the right way, His name is glorified. That is what we pray in the Lord's Prayer when we pray, "Hallowed by Thy name." We are praying that God's name be kept holy among us. We are praying that Jesus, our Good Shepherd would lead us on paths of righteousness to bring glory to His name.

Where are you walking today? Are you bringing glory or shame to the Name?

### **The Valley of Death**

#### **Psalm 23:4 (GW)**

**<sup>4</sup> Even though I walk through the dark valley of death, because you are with me, I fear no harm.** Your rod and your staff give me courage.

Why is it whenever we think of death, we think of darkness? When we think of darkness we think of evil? The dark is filled with the unknown. Anything could be hiding in it. Waiting to hurt us. Perhaps that is why death is scary and dark. It is the unknowing. But for those of us who follow Jesus, death is not the unknown. Revelation 21 gives us a glimpse into the city being prepared for us. Jesus referred to life in heaven as being a great banquet (Luke 14:15-24); there is a special place being prepared just for you (John 14:2); heaven will be filled with people from all nations (Revelation 7:9-10); in heaven there will no longer be any sadness (Revelation 7:13-17).

But the greatest comfort we have while going through the dark times of our lives is that our Good Shepherd promises to be with us. If you watch scary movies, you know that the worst decision made is to be alone. That is when the person becomes vulnerable to the evil. It is the same regarding our spiritual lives. When we think we can go it alone, we are attacked by temptation, doubts, and fears. During this time of forced social distancing, we are being assaulted heavily by the devil and his minions. Marriages are being attacked. Family relationships are being strained. Many are feeling isolated and alone. Yes, we can email. Yes, we can call others on the phone. We may even have the capability to video chat. We can participate in worship via the internet. But we long for direct human contact. Perhaps we are at home with our loved ones. But we don't know how to live with each other. What should be a pleasant time of togetherness has become a house filled with angry people who get on each other's nerves. What should be a bright time, is now a dark time. We are in the dark valley of death. We are alone. Or are we? Jesus promises never to leave us. **Matthew 28:20b (GW)**  
*"And remember that I am always with you until the end of time."*

You are not alone in the dark valley. Jesus walks with you. C.S. Lewis has a great illustration of this in *The Horse and his Boy* (part of the Chronicles of Narnia). Shasta is riding all alone at

night. It is so dark he cannot see anything. Suddenly he realizes he is not alone. Something is walking next to him. He begins a conversation with the something. It reveals to him that he is speaking with a lion. The lion who has been watching out for him his whole life. Light begins to lift the darkness. Shasta realizes that the light is coming from the lion who has been walking and talking with him. He falls at the lion's feet in worship and the darkness is turned into day!

When we realize that Jesus, our Good Shepherd, is not only walking with us in the valley of death but is also guiding us, fear is gone. We are not alone. We never will be alone. Suddenly the darkness doesn't seem so scary after all.

### **Thy Rod and Thy Staff**

#### **Psalm 23:4 (GW)**

*<sup>4</sup> Even though I walk through the dark valley of death, because you are with me, I fear no harm. Your rod and your staff give me courage.*

How does a rod and staff give comfort? One is used to defend the sheep. One is used to correct the sheep. The shepherd uses one against enemies. He swings it at them and drives the enemy of the sheep away. The other is used to bring the sheep back. When a sheep begins to wander from the shepherd, he uses the crook end to pull the sheep back. It is not used as punishment but rather to protect the sheep from self-harm.

What are the rod and staff of our Good Shepherd? One way to think of these is to think of Law and Gospel. The Law is that part of scripture that tells us we must do. Think of the Ten Commandments. They have three uses: 1) As a mirror – they show us our sin. By showing us our sin. They also show us our need for savior. 2) As a curb – they keep us in check. Without traffic signs (laws) driving would be extremely dangerous as everyone would drive wherever and however, they wanted. 3) As a guide – they show us how we should live. The first two uses of the Law are painful. We want to do what we want to do. We don't want anyone to tell us what to do. But the third use of the Law is done out of love. Love for our Good Shepherd compels us to want to obey.

The Gospel is soothing medicine to troubled souls. Those who have looked in the Law's mirror see themselves for who they really are. It is not a pretty sight. But the Gospel is the good news that God sees as He sees Jesus – loved and perfect. Law condemns but the Gospel saves. The Law is a you must do. The Gospel is Jesus has already done for you. The Law without the Gospel would bring no comfort. The Gospel without the Law would bring no protection. But together we are protected from the assaults of the evil wolf who wants to convince us that we are not under the Good Shepherd's care. He wants us to think that we are too bad to be part of the flock. The Gospel assures us of the Good Shepherd's love and mercy. Together they protect us and comfort us.

Where do we find Law and Gospel? In God's Word, the Bible. The writer of Psalm 119 loved God's word so much he wrote the longest psalm about it. He wrote this psalm as a beautiful poem using the Hebrew alphabet. You may know parts of it, but why not take time over these days of being shut in to read the entire psalm? See how it talks about both Law and Gospel and

the value of them together. Who knows, maybe as you read Psalm 119 you will receive courage for these days of uncertainty!

### **In the Presence of My Enemies**

#### **Psalm 23:5 (GW)**

**<sup>5</sup> You prepare a banquet for me while my enemies watch.** You anoint my head with oil. My cup overflows.

God doesn't promise us a life of ease. He won't remove us from all trouble until He removes us completely from life on earth to life in heaven. But He does provide for us over and above our expectations in the face of our troubles. He invites us to eat of His rich food while our enemies watch!

We see this truth throughout scriptures. Pharaoh wanted to weaken the Israelites. So, he forced them into hard labor. Instead of weakening them, they grew stronger and more numerous! The Israelites complained against God in the wilderness. He sent poisonous snakes among them. They prayed that the snakes would be removed. Instead He had Moses make a snake out of bronze. Anyone who looked at it after being bitten would live. Their reliance and trust in God grew. It also pointed them (and us) to Jesus on the cross! Jerusalem lay in ruins. Nehemiah organized the people to rebuild its walls. The enemies of the Jews had fun of them and conspired against them. Instead of going into hiding, the Jews were able to finish the walls in record time. Even their enemies knew that God was with them! The scribes and the pharisees plotted against Jesus. They thought they had gotten rid of him and his teaching when he died on the cross. But He needed to die in order to forgive them of all their sin! The disciples were beaten and commanded not to preach about Jesus anymore. Instead of being afraid, they became bolder and even more people believed in Jesus! Paul and Silas were arrested, beaten and thrown into the inner dungeon. Instead of holding a pity party, they held a worship service. The Philippian jailer and his entire household were saved (and probably many of the other prisoners)!

Who are your enemies? Maybe your enemies are bodily problems (remember Paul's thorn in the flesh? God didn't take it away, instead He made His grace more known in Paul). Maybe your enemies are economic (Remember Elisha and the poor widow. Her sons would be sold as slaves to pay off the debt. All she had was a small bottle of oil. Elisha told her to borrow as many jars as she could. The small bottle of oil filled all the jars). Maybe your enemies are people (Remember that even as Stephen was stoned to death he prayed for his persecutors. Young Saul was standing by and giving his approval. God answered Stephen's prayer for Saul on the road to Damascus). Whatever your enemies may be, look for the way in which God will feast you in the presence of your enemies.

Remember, God doesn't remove our enemies, but He does richly provide for us in their presence!

## You Anoint My Head with Oil

### Psalm 23:5 (GW)

<sup>5</sup> You prepare a banquet for me while my enemies watch. **You anoint my head with oil.** My cup overflows.

Kings, Priests and Prophets were all anointed with oil on the head with oil. This was sign that they were set apart by God for a special purpose. David the writer of Psalm 23 was anointed by Samuel years before he became king. God had chosen him to rule His people. The years between the time that Samuel anointed David and he finally became king were years of training by God. David the shepherd boy was not ready to lead God's people. All the hardships that David went through prepared him for the task of being Israel's greatest king.

Jesus, Our Good Shepherd, also anoints us. Oil in the Bible is often associated with the Holy Spirit. The pouring out of oil upon the head was a refreshing and healing experience. Jesus pours out the holy Spirit upon us, His sheep. The Holy Spirit refreshes us. He refreshes our memory to recall all that Jesus taught and did. He refreshes our souls by correcting our actions and thinking. He heals us by imparting the forgiveness of sins that Jesus won on the cross to us. The holy spirit grants us faith to believe these things. The will to live them out. Courage to ask for forgiveness when we fail.

Jesus pours this oil of the Holy Spirit upon us to set us apart by God for a special purpose.

**1 Peter 2:9 (GW)** <sup>9</sup> *However, you are chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, people who belong to God. You were chosen to tell about the excellent qualities of God, who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.*

Jesus chooses you! He makes you into a royal priesthood. That means He anoints you to be a prince or princess. You are part of the royal family; Jesus is our king. You are brought into the priesthood of all believers. The priest stood between God and the people and offered sacrifices. You who have been anointed with the Holy Spirit also stand between God and the people. You are called to stand and offer sacrifice of praise. You are called to pray for others. You are called to be an intermediary between unbelieving people and Jesus. You are also called to serve as a prophet. The role of the Old testament prophet was two-fold. He was to foretell what God was going to do. He was also to forth tell the Word of God. You who have been anointed by the Holy Spirit are to forth tell the Word of God to others. You are to use God's Word to encourage and correct other believers. You are also to forth tell the word of God to those who do not yet believe. Why? Because Faith comes by hearing, hearing the word of God(Romans 10:17)!

How will you live out your anointing today?

## My Cup Overflows

### Psalm 23:5 (GW)

<sup>5</sup> You prepare a banquet for me while my enemies watch. You anoint my head with oil. My cup overflows.



What does an overflowing cup signify? More blessings than you can hold. But notice, David does not say, “My cup will overflow.” David does not say, “My cup overflowed in the past.” Now he says that his cup is overflowing now. He is saying that his blessings from God are so much that that he cannot contain them.

What about you? Is your cup overflowing with God’s blessings? Perhaps you are thinking, “How can it be, I am confined in my house. The pandemic is ruining everything!” I must admit, yesterday (Sunday, March 29) was difficult for me. I was looking forward to Easter worship. I had recorded this Sunday’s service already. I announced that it looked like we will be able to gather for Easter. But then the news came that the Nation will be shut down through the end of April. I was so disappointed. I was so discouraged. I felt so lost. How can I pastor during this time? How can I be with you, the people of New Life during this time? How can I minister to you? Such doubts ran through my mind. Perhaps my time as a pastor is done.

“My cup overflows.” What? Even during these times of crisis? Even during these times of doubts? Even during these times of fears and frustrations? “My cup overflows!” How can this be?

The prophet Jeremiah is known as the weeping prophet. He was shown the destruction of Jerusalem. He was shown the slaughter of his people. He was given the task to warn them. They laughed at him. They ignored him. They arrested him and threatened him to silence him. He wrote a short book called Lamentations. It is a book of tears. He is weeping over the destruction of his people. But there in chapter 3 we find these words:

**Lamentations 3:22-23 (ESV)**

*<sup>22</sup> The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases;  
his mercies never come to an end;  
<sup>23</sup> they are new every morning;  
great is your faithfulness.*

God’s blessings start with His mercy. He does not punish me the way I deserve. His forgiveness is always there. What a relief. Each morning is a new day. The sins of yesterday are forgiven. What a relief! This pandemic is not a punishment against me. Even during this pandemic, God’s blessings continue to overflow my cup. I am forgiven. I have a place to live. I have a family to be with. This morning I even had potatoes, Brussel sprouts, broccoli and ham, all fried up in a skillet with a hot cup of tea. What a blessing that my stove top worked, that I had these leftovers to cook. That I have running water. That I can make this. And I could go on. Truly, my cup overflows!

Our second service members have a favorite hymn they sing. They sing this hymn at almost all celebrations. Why not sing or pray this hymn right now? See if your cup is not overflowing!

**Count Your Blessings**

1. When upon life’s billows you are tempest-tossed,  
When you are discouraged, thinking all is lost,

Count your many blessings, name them one by one,  
And it will surprise you what the Lord has done.

*Refrain:*

Count your blessings, name them one by one,  
Count your blessings, see what God has done!  
Count your blessings, name them one by one,  
Count your many blessings, see what God has done.

2. Are you ever burdened with a load of care?  
Does the cross seem heavy you are called to bear?  
Count your many blessings, every doubt will fly,  
And you will keep singing as the days go by.

3. So, amid the conflict whether great or small,  
Do not be discouraged, God is over all;  
Count your many blessings, angels will attend,  
Help and comfort give you to your journey's end.

### **Goodness and Mercy**

**Psalm 23:6 (GW)**

<sup>6</sup> Certainly, goodness and mercy will stay close to me all the days of my life, and I will remain in the LORD'S house for days without end.

Mercy is not getting the punishment we deserve. But what is goodness? Is it not the Good Shepherd? He who brings us to green pastures and quiet waters. He who heals us. He who forgives us. "God is good – all the time! All the time – God is good!"

Our trouble is we fail to see the Goodness of God in our difficult situations. David says, "Surely they follow me." Surely! Without a doubt, God's goodness is there. Pandemic? God's goodness is there. Loss of job? God's goodness is there! Death? God's goodness is there! How can this be? Because His mercy is there. Because He is there!

David says that these things follow him all his days. Why do they follow? Because just like sheep, we try to wander away. Yet where can we go to get away from God (Psalm 139:7-12)? He is our Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd looks for His sheep. We wander away, but He follows us to bring us back.

*All the days of my life.* I like how Charles Spurgeon put this in *The Treasury of David*: *all the days of his life*—the black days as well as the bright days, the days of fasting as well as the days of feasting, the dreary days of winter as well as the bright days of summer. Goodness supplies our needs, and mercy blots out our sins.

We can add the lock down days and the free to roam days. The days of pandemic and the days of healing. Jesus' promise is **Matthew 28:20b (GW)** "And remember that I am always with you until the end of time." The end of time – all of my days. Jesus is with us! His love (goodness/grace) and mercy are always with us!

Where do you see Jesus' goodness and mercy in your life today?

### **The House of the Lord**

#### **Psalm 23:6 (GW)**

<sup>6</sup> Certainly, goodness and mercy will stay close to me all the days of my life, and **I will remain in the LORD'S house for days without end.**

When you think of the phrase, "The Lord's house" what comes to mind? Many people think of church. When you think of going to church, what comes to mind? Sitting in uncomfortable seats for a long time? Listening to a boring pastor? Goofing around on your phone while time passes slowly? Seeing your friends? Hearing of God's great love for you? Getting a better understanding of God's word? Being in the presence of God? David was excited and joyful at the thought of going to church. **Psalm 122:1 (GW)** <sup>1</sup> *I was glad when they said to me, "Let's go to the house of the LORD."*

I recently heard a man complain about a respected older pastor, "The only thing I remember about his sermons were boring baseball stories." How sad. How hurtful. But it does point out false thinking when it comes to worship. Too many of us want to be entertained during the worship service. We just want to sit back and watch just like at home on our couch. But that is not what worship is. Worship is not really what we get out of it. Worship is what we put into it. Worship is about our telling, singing, praising God for what He has done and is doing for us! Worship is our act of love towards God in response to His love for us.

Let me share a story with you to illustrate this. My father-in-law was sick in the hospital. My wife stayed by his bedside each night. It was Valentines day. I wanted to show her how much I loved her. So, I planned out a special meal that she could eat (she has a lot of food sensitivities). I also put down a picnic blanket in a room. I set up candles all around the room. When she came home, I told her to sit and rest while I finished making dinner. I took all the food to the room and laid it out as attractive as I could. I then led her to the room and opened the door to the darkened room only lit by candles. We sat on the floor and enjoyed our meal together. My wife and I have eaten many meals together over the years. Eating together can become boring. But this meal I was excited about. this meal I was looking forward. I wanted to show her how much I love and appreciated her. I didn't want anything in return except to see the joy on her face.

That is what our times of worship should be like. Not what we get out of it (but we certainly do get a lot of worshipping together. We hear God's word. We are encouraged in our walk of faith by each other. We receive the forgiveness of sins. We receive the body and blood of Jesus.), but rather what we put into it. We come to worship, to say I love you Jesus! Perhaps, as we have been unable to worship together for a few weeks now, our time together will be more special and

meaningful. But we shouldn't let that experience become common place. We need to work on keeping worship special.

**I will remain in the LORD'S house for days without end.**

There is another meaning to this phrase. It is best described by Jesus. **John 14:2-3 (GW)**  
<sup>2</sup> *My Father's house has many rooms. If that were not true, would I have told you that I'm going to prepare a place for you?* <sup>3</sup> *If I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again. Then I will bring you into my presence so that you will be where I am.* Heaven is described as living in God's house. A house that God has prepared especially for you. God knows you better than anyone else. His special place for you is not a generic one size fits all place. It is designed, laid out and created with only you in mind. It is a permanent place, home for you. Why would you want to be anywhere else? You will be the presence of God who loves you more than anyone else loves you. you will be with your Good Shepherd in the special place he made just for you!