

REST

Psalm 23

Brian Rants - aka: "Isn't that the worship leader's husband?"

1

The best players
don't make the best coaches...

2

- "the best players don't make the best teachers," my mentor told me. "It comes too easy for them, so they don't understand why it's so hard for others, or what advice to offer to help them progress."
- He spoke of how one of the worlds best teachers at clarinet, his chosen instrument, played in a second tier city; like Buffalo New York

The Weirdest Coaching Staff in Baseball Has Made the Giants a Powerhouse

"The San Francisco Giants have a coaching staff unlike any other, and their success is forcing the sport to rethink who is qualified to be in a major-league dugout."



<https://www.esq.com/articles/san-francisco-giants-coaching-staff-11651492931>

3

- Similarly; I read in an article recently how the San Francisco Giants have rocked the sports world with a coaching team full of men who never played professional baseball.
- I realize by bringing up a team other than the Dodgers, Ron will never... ever...ask me to speak again.
- That said, their coaching staff is comprised of a 15 year bullpen catcher from Japan, who loved the game but was never good enough for the MLB. Another an infielder who topped out at Division 2 ball in college. They achieved what they did, however modest, not because of raw skill, but because of a love for the game, endless hours of study and work.
- I am qualified to speak on the topic of rest, in part, because of how difficult it is for me.

A live look inside my brain



4

The Lord in his wisdom saw fit to give me a brain with Tourette and ADHD, which means it operates comfortably at 80 miles an hour, but somehow I'm missing first and second gear. Sometimes 3rd.

- I'm a former designer. Creative. Songwriter. Now in software sales...and I find it much easier to concentrate in a coffee shop, with upbeat music playing and stimulation all around. Trying to concentrate in the quiet of solitude can feel...excruciating.

An epidemic of distraction

5

- Perhaps like someone who is genetically predisposed to be susceptible to substance abuse, I am predisposed to be vulnerable to what I believe is an epidemic of distraction.
- The switching of devices, constant stimulation from our 24/7 world...and as such have had to work for decades to build practices so I can have the space for Jesus to speak in a still, small voice.
- So I offer these learnings to you not as a member of the New York Philharmonic, but the Canby Philharmonic. Not the LA Dodgers but the Canby Cougars.
- For I believe, and will give you ample evidence today, that one of the great covert plans of the enemy of our soul is to steal our attention, kill our inner peace, and destroy our places of rest.

Zooming Out What are the Psalms?

6

One of the hard won lessons from 3 decades of studying scripture is that one of the simplest ways of avoiding misunderstanding scripture is to simply zoom out.

What is the word mean in the context of the sentence. What is the sentence mean in the context of the paragraph. Where does the paragraph sit in the chapter, and how is this chapter situated in the overall book? And, why?

The Psalms

Bible Project

7

For this, let's watch one of the great treasures of biblical knowledge, which happens amazingly to be here in Portland Oregon, the Bible project. We will listen to about four minutes where they talk about how the book of psalms is organized, and where Psalm 23 sits within book one.

Psalm 22

A mirror image

8

So in this the second book within Psalms, we have David as the example to follow. And if we then want to understand Psalm 23 in the context of this second book within Psalms, it's as simple as looking at the Psalm before it.

Knowing that for the literary geniuses of the Hebrew Bible there is no such thing as a coincidence, many of the commentaries I read noted that Psalm 23 is a fitting response to Psalm 22.

Psalm 22

Verses 1-2, NLT

My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?
Why are you so far away when I groan for help?

Every day I call to you, my God, but you do not answer.
Every night I lift my voice, but I find no relief...

9

Psalm 22

Verses 7, 14-16

Everyone who sees me mocks me...

My life is poured out like water,
and all my bones are out of joint.

My strength has dried up like unbaked clay...

My enemies surround me like a pack of dogs...

10

David's Final Determination

Psalms 22:25, 31

I will praise you in the great assembly.
I will fulfill my vows in the presence of those who worship you...
His righteous acts will be told to those not yet born.
They will hear about everything he has done...

11

Doubting
Weak
Exhausted
Abandoned

12

Long
Up and Down
Personal & Prophetic
The (real) Journey of Faith

13

How does David wrestle through
grief, suffering, embarrassment,
anger, and anxiety...
And end up in a place of confident
trust?

14

He knows who God is.

15

He knows who God is. Not “knows as the intellectual assent,” the sort of Greek division of mind/body/spirit. The Hebrew understanding, where orthodoxy (what we believe) and orthopraxy (what we do) are simply sides of the same coin. What he does, shows what he believes. He’s experienced it. And he knows that in God’s presence he finds:

REST

16

He finds in God’s presence...REST.

Psalm 23
Surrendering to rest

17

Psalm 23

Verses 1-3, NLT

The Lord is my shepherd;
I have all that I need.

He lets me rest in green meadows;
he leads me beside peaceful streams.

He renews my strength.

18

Psalm 23

Verses 3-4, NLT

He guides me along right paths,
bringing honor to his name.

Even when I walk
through the darkest valley,
I will not be afraid,
for you are close beside me.

19

Psalm 23

Verses 4-5, NLT

Your rod and your staff
protect and comfort me.

You prepare a feast for me
in the presence of my enemies.
You honor me by anointing my head with oil.
My cup overflows with blessings.

20

Psalm 23

Verses 6, NLT

Surely your goodness and unfailing love will pursue me
all the days of my life,
and I will live in the house of the Lord
forever.

21

Confident
Rested
Honored
Triumphant

22

Ruler
Provider
Guide
Protector

23

So let's talk about the 4 ways David describes Yahweh as His Shepherd.

Ruler
Provider
Guide
Protector

24

The first connotation is one that might be lost on us as modern readers, and that is God as Ruler

We're not sheepish

About being #1

- Sheep were domesticated in the ancient Near East in 7000 BC
- They are mentioned more than any other livestock
- Core economic resource for agrarian societies like the setting of the Bible — source of food, wool and hide
- As lumber was to PacNW, Steel to Pittsburgh...

25

Sheep were domesticated in 7000 BC.
If you do the math that's a dang long time ago

Sheep snuggler?

When you think of the word "shepherd," are you thinking about this guy?



26

A Dutch or maybe Norwegian boy, somehow plopped into the middle eastern clothes and culture.

Supreme Ruler

Ancient Near East Usage

- Enlil chief among Mesopotamian deities, called “the faithful Shepherd”
- Enuma Elish says of Marduk ^(inset) “Let him shepherd all the gods like sheep”
- Amenhotep III of Egypt presents himself as “the good shepherd”



27

Ruler

“The Lord is my Shepherd”

Emphasis added

28

This is similar “Jesus is Lord” was throwing elbows at Caesar worship, a risky thing when all the Mediterranean countries and far beyond dominated by a ruthless world power that had “Caesar is Lord” as central to their emperor worship. Saying Jesus is Lord was both political and spiritual.

David is saying...Yahweh Lord is my Shepherd. He’s my authority, and he’s calling Israel to similarly respond in restful submission.

Ruler
Provider
Guide
Protector

29

Then the next line of verse one introduces the theme of God as Provider

Psalm 23

Verses 1-3, NLT

The Lord is my shepherd;
I have all that I need.

He lets me rest in green meadows;
he leads me beside peaceful streams.

He renews my strength.

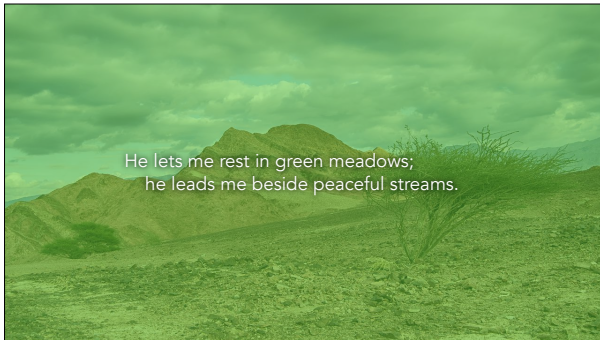
30

Shepherds guided their flocks to sustenance, and places of rest. Again, the importance of this role might be lost in the verdant Willamette Valley, where our greatest challenge is to get stuff to STOP growing! We see ferns growing out of moss growing out of a tree that is growing out of another tree.



31

I haven't had the privilege of visiting Israel, but the landscape as you see here can austere. I was in Central Oregon last week, and there are certainly places where without irrigation the vegetation starts getting sparse.



32

So against this background David — a former Shepherd of Sheep, and as a Shepherd of a Nation — gives the highest praise to Yahweh as Provider..

“He lets me rest in green meadows; he leads me beside peaceful streams.”

Bible Nerd rabbit trail: the Bible Project has done a great video on the role of water in the Hebrew Bible. Waters are often portrayed as chaotic and terrifying, as in Genesis 1 or even Jesus in the Storm on the sea. People died in these storms on primitive water craft...David here is clear the waters are peaceful, still, and serene.

The Good Shepherd

Matthew 11:28

Then Jesus said, “Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you...”

33

This theme of provision continues into the new testament... And reaches it's most potent expression in the person of Jesus, who invites us to...

REST"

34

Ruler
Provider
Guide
Protector

35

Indeed, what better compliment could you give to a guide than that he gets you to exactly...where...you...need...to be.

Psalm 23

Verse 3, NLT

He guides me along right paths,
bringing honor to his name.

36

I love to fly fish — a great guide knows the river or lake like the back of his hand and has an instinct for where the fish will be based on the time of year and conditions. He not only puts you right on them, but teaches you how to access them.

Yahweh knows where the right paths are, and how to enable David to rest.

Psalm 23

Verses 3-4, NLT

He guides me along right paths,
bringing honor to his name.

Even when I walk
through the darkest valley,
I will not be afraid,
for you are close beside me.

37

But lest we be tempted to turn this Psalm into a saccharine, simplistically sweet sentiment for a Hallmark card, we are reminded that darkness has entered the world.

Even accessing these places of rest often require walking through valleys fraught with danger, temptation, and...dare I say...distraction. I'll return to this in a moment, but

Protector

38

And that is why we need a good shepherd who is our protector

Psalm 23

Verse 4, NLT

Your rod and your staff
protect and comfort me.

39

Due to the importance of sheep to the economic survival of the people, a shepherd's role was marked by sustained vigilance for his flock. As the Lexham Bible dictionary notes, they dealt with inclement weather, substandard lodging, and the threat of dangerous animals intent on preying on the flock.

So the shepherd would carry the appropriate tools, including:

- A staff: to help negotiate difficult terrain and to count sheep
- A rod: used to defend sheep from predators

Psalm 23

Verses 4-5, NLT

Your rod and your staff
protect and comfort me.

You prepare a feast for me
in the presence of my enemies.
You honor me by anointing my head with oil.
My cup overflows with blessings.

40

Then David continues reverting to the theme of provider, that God has not only protected him...kept him safe from danger...but has honored him..in front of those very enemies. He has chosen David, signified by an anointing, and has so provided that he is like a cup to full it cannot contain the blessing.

The Anointed One

Jesus, our Good Shepherd

John 1:41 NIV

The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, "We have found the Messiah" (that is, the Christ).

John 4:25 NIV

The woman said, "I know that Messiah" (called Christ) "is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us."

41

And David said he has been Anointed with Oil. This is a key concept in both the Hebrew Bible and the new testament, where we see Jesus called the Anointed one

Both confusing and awesome, both Messiah and Christ are titles that mean "Anointed One." Messiah means anointed one in Hebrew — and Kristos is a Greek translation of the Hebrew.

So we can see here that John is ensuring both his Greek and Hebrew readers understood that Jesus was the one. He was chosen. Chosen to rule, to provide for, to guide and to protect his people — by giving himself as the lamb of sacrifice, to remove the stain our selfishness and rebellion and make us right with God.

Ruler
Provider
Guide
Protector

42

So David has experienced Yahweh as His good shepherd, in all of these ways.

Confident
Rested
Honored
Triumphant

43

And it's what enables him to be...

REST

44

So this all sounds so good, right. I'm craving it right now after the week I had. So what could possibly keep us from following our Good Shepherd into these places of rest?

Prowling...Searching...

1 Peter 5, NIV

Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.

Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.

45

Well let's see how Peter describes the opposition we face...

[Read the scripture]

Continuing the metaphor from cover to cover, prowling in the long grass, lurking in the shadows, seeking to devour the sheep...is the enemy of our souls, seeking to steal our joy, kill the new life in us, destroy the peace and rest Jesus came to bring.

ANXIETY

46

So let's focus on this word that Peter uses...anxiety. Gosh, just the word anxiety makes me anxious.

Peter exhorts us to cast our anxiety on the Lord, then moves on to warn about the prowling, searching enemy of our souls.

It has been my experience, and observation, that...[take out my phone and

get distracted]

Oh sorry, it has been...ummm...no way...

Ok, I'm with you. I have observed, and the body of research is wide and deep that these marvels of technology are contributing to a culture of distraction. Creating an always-on environment of constant stimulus that makes it very hard to rest.

Rewired

Jonathan Haidt on the last 10 years of American Life

"Today, our society has reached another tipping point," he wrote in a letter to investors. Facebook hoped "to rewire the way people spread and consume information."

47

Jonathan Haidt, professor and powerful American intellectual, talks about the retiring of our brains and the anger, anxiety and hostility it has produced.

““In February 2012, as he prepared to take Facebook public, Mark Zuckerberg reflected on those extraordinary times and set forth his plans. “Today, our society has reached another tipping point,”...Facebook hoped “to rewire the way people spread and consume information.” And “transform many of our core institutions and industries.”

In the 10 years since then, Zuckerberg did exactly what he said he would do. He did rewire the way we spread and consume information; he did transform our institutions, and he pushed us past the tipping point. It has not worked out as he expected...”

Early incarnations were relatively harmless

Jonathan Haidt on the last 10 years of American Life

"But gradually, social-media users became more comfortable sharing intimate details of their lives with strangers and corporations."

48

In their early incarnations, platforms such as Myspace and Facebook were relatively harmless. They allowed users to create pages on which to post photos, family updates...

But gradually, social-media users became more comfortable sharing intimate details of their lives with strangers and corporations....they became more adept at putting on performances and managing their personal brand—activities that might impress others but that do not deepen friendships in the way that a private phone conversation will.

Would you "Like" to "Share?"

Jonathan Haidt on the last 10 years of American Life

"Before 2009, Facebook had given users a simple timeline... That began to change in 2009, when Facebook offered users a way to publicly "like" posts with the click of a button...

...Facebook developed algorithms to bring each user the content most likely to generate a "like"...

49

...the stage was set for the major transformation...

Before 2009, Facebook had given users a simple timeline—a never-ending stream of content generated by their friends and connections, with the newest posts at the top and the oldest ones at the bottom. This was often overwhelming in its volume, but it was an accurate reflection of what others were posting.

That began to change in 2009, when Facebook offered users a way to publicly "like" posts with the click of a button. That same year, Twitter introduced...the "Retweet" button...Facebook soon copied that innovation with its own "Share" button...

Would you “Like” to “Share?”

Jonathan Haidt on the last 10 years of American Life

“Later research showed the posts that trigger emotion—especially anger...—are the most likely to be shared.

50

Shortly after its “Like” button began to produce data about what best “engaged” its users, Facebook developed algorithms to bring each user the content most likely to generate a “like” or some other interaction, eventually including the “share” as well. Later research showed that posts that trigger emotions—especially anger...are the most likely to be shared.

ENRAGING IS ENGAGING

51

This leads to the phrase “Enraging is engaging,” which American-Swiss intellectual Johann Hari refers to in his book: “stolen focus: why you can’t pay attention to how to think deeply again.”

“I could feel my own attention getting worse”

Stolen Focus

“With this book, I could feel my own attention getting worse. Things that required deep focus...were getting more and more like running up a down escalator.

I could still do them, but they were getting harder. And I could see this happening to most people I knew...”

52

The average American...

- The typical American worker focuses on a given task for just three minutes.
- Each day, we touch or check our phones more than 2,000 times, and...
- Spend more than three hours staring at them, on average

53

Johann talks about the time the Average American spends on their mobile phones...

I remember waiting in line last weekend for a swim center; looking around and not a single person other than myself wasn’t giraffe necked in their phone. And don’t let me act sanctimonious, I absolutely wanted to. And phones, Facebook...all these technologies are tools. I mean I literally sell software for

a living, I'm not a Luddite :)

I've just recognized, as Johann did, that I need to be aware of their addictive design, and my susceptibility to become addicted to distraction, if I want to be able to rest.

Fighting For Rest

54

Rest is not something the world, the powers and authorities in this country we love, are going to offer us. We get a 24/7 feed of bad news and engraving click-bait headlines. Mental and spiritual junk food.

On top of that, personally, rest is simply not something I'm wired for. I'd rather be in at Baker's Prairie with a bunch of people, listening to podcasts on economics and world events...anything but being alone, with my thoughts.

Blaise Pascal

Christian, father of modern science

"All of humanity's problems stem from man's inability to sit quietly in a room alone."

55

Indeed Blaise Pascal, a follower of Christ and father of modern science, opined that "All of humanity's problems stem from man's inability to sit quietly in a room alone."

And he said this in the 1600s. So clearly this isn't just a right now problem... though research is making it clear that technology and algorithms of anxiety and outrage have made it much worse.

HOLY

56

We need a return to Holy time. Sometimes words can get churchified...at its core it means set apart.

I've met with a group of 3-4 other guys for the last 7 years, and for most of that time the primary thing I've made myself accountable to them for is learning to have quiet and still time before God. Even reading a book about God is easier than to be still in His presence...yet I was aware...the Spirit

made me aware...than most of the struggles I had were symptoms of a deeper sickness: distraction. Anxiety. So I've learned....don't laugh...to be able to sit for 5 minutes. 10 minutes. 15 minutes. And be still. And it's only taken me 7 years :)

If you want to make time to rest and be restored by your Shepherd, set time apart. It's not the benefit of God. He is sufficiently praised, no? Around the clock attended the heavenly council and praised by creatures beyond description. It is for you. It is for me. To pause the rhythms created by Silicon Valley algorithms and align ourselves with the rhythms of His glorious presence.

To set aside the beeps and boops and constantly mental assault of pixels and enraging headlines...and to enter the sabbath rest, the 7th day rest that never ends! Just for that moment brings a bit of heaven to earth, let's us exit the rat race and enter the timeline of eternity! Let's experience now that which will some day be ours in the presence of Jesus.

Resources for Rest

- Phone charging station
- "Quiet Hours"
- Apps (!): Soulspace, Bible App podcasts
- Books: The Daily Office, Soul Custody

57

- Part of your spiritual practice to set apart time to connect with your family could be as simple as plugging in your phone and leaving it on the charger for the night. It's right there, in the other room. If someone calls you, you can go check. If someone texts you, you can always go look at the phone and determine if you need to text back.
- Phone operating systems these days let you set quiet hours — choose which alerts come through, and set personal time where you are not

bothered by the latest outrageous headline, or celebrity crisis.

- There's even apps that can help! SoulSpace has restful prayers, the Bible App has podcasts which are extended times of rest and scripture reading
- Books have become again a treasure to me. As in like actual paper books. Kept next to my bedside, it lets me turn off devices...the book will never push an enraging headline to the front of the page...and books like The Daily Office teach us to sit in stillness before the Lord, guide in a brief prayer....like daily cleaning to keep your spiritual house well.
- If you know you have some deep cleaning to do, Soul Custody helps you look at each of the main areas of your life like work, family, play...and examine where you need to take custody of your spiritual life.

REST

58

So in closing I want to invite you to spend 2 minutes in silence before the Lord....then I'll read Psalm 23 one more time.

Go ahead and close your eyes...if you feel distracted that's ok. If this is super uncomfortable, you probably aren't the only one....

The Lord is my shepherd;

I have all that I need.

He lets me rest in green meadows;

he leads me beside peaceful streams.

He renews my strength.

He guides me along right paths,

bringing honor to his name.

Even when I walk

through the darkest valley,

I will not be afraid,
for you are close beside me.
Your rod and your staff
protect and comfort me.
You prepare a feast for me
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You honor me by anointing my head with oil.
My cup overflows with blessings.
Surely your goodness and unfailing love will pursue me
all the days of my life,
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forever.
