

# Retreat of Silence, The Lord Is Our Shepherd (Ps 23)

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## Getting Ready - this retreat can be done from 1 - 3 hours.

Before sitting down to pray:

- Minimize distractions as much as possible.
- Consider putting your phone in airplane mode.
- Make sure you have some paper, a pen, and your Bible.
- Divide the time you have set aside into three equal periods.
  - For example, if you have set aside one hour, each period will be 20 minutes long.
  - Feel free to be flexible and change the time allocated for each period as you go.

## Period 1 - Settle

To begin the time, focus on Jesus' invitation in Matthew 11:28, to come to him and find rest. Rest your body and mind and heart.

*Body:* What is happening for you physically in this season? As you pay attention, what would it look like to rest your body? Perhaps a nap, a walk, stretching?

*Mind:* What has been occupying your mind in this season? Where is your mind in a state of unrest? What would it look like to give Jesus your thoughts and for your mind to come to a place of rest?

*Heart:* What emotions are at the forefront in this season? What would coming to rest in your emotions look like now?

Ask your Father how he wants you to rest your body, mind, and heart as you begin time with Him.

## Period 2 – God's Word for You

Our experiences in this time with Covid-19 are unprecedented. For some of us, it is disorienting, and has changed how we live and work. For others, this virus has directly affected us or those we love. And others are dealing with the reality of loss of loved ones. It is a good time to return to solid ground.

Psalm 23 is a familiar Psalm, for good reasons. It is one of those "anchor" texts that helps us to remember the reality of who God is and who we are, no matter what we are experiencing. It expresses the truth that we are like sheep in need of a Shepherd—that our value in "being" always outweighs our value in "doing." And we do have solid ground to stand on.

Today, take some time to revisit this Psalm, bringing to God whatever your current experience is, and letting our Shepherd minister to you.

Read or listen to it slowly, two or three times, each time noticing what part of the Psalm, what words, or what pictures the Spirit highlights for you—for *your* soul.

InterVarsity's Staff Care Team created these resources to equip InterVarsity staff to care for students and faculty during the COVID-19 crisis.

Once this is clear, settle into that word or image, inviting God to speak to you. Explore it with God, like a map, a puzzle, or layers of an onion, bringing out the details of what this word or image is meaning to you now.

You may want to journal about this, draw a picture, write a poem or song. Engaging in your creative side may help you explore this and gain some understanding on what God's word is for you this day.

Perhaps God's word can be rephrased as a prayer for today as well (e.g. "Lord, thank you that you will meet my needs.").

Finally, rest with God's word in you. Take a "break" from using your mind and engage in some other activity (walk outside if possible, cook, knit, do a project) that can free up your mind a bit. In this time, be expectant to meet with God as you let the scriptures marinate in your soul or let the prayer from the Psalm that you formed work in you.

### **Period 3 – God's Word for the World**

As you consider how God has met with you today, another way to hear God's word is to hear it not just for yourself, but for the world around you.

Return to the word or the prayer, and ask God how this can become your prayer for the world outside of yourself:

- For those you minister to in our mission field
- For your family, neighbors and church community
- For those affected by Covid-19 – the sick, medical professionals, the jobless and homeless, the marginalized...
- For leaders who need wisdom and courage as they respond and make decisions
- For nations

Conclude your retreat with a time for thanksgiving and joy (perhaps a good worship song), resting in the promises of God and his loving sovereignty over his creation.