

Psalm 23:3
Sermon date: September 27, 2026

Ice breaker

- 1) Tell about a time you were truly lost, driving, hiking, in an airport, in a new city. What did it feel like in the moment, and what finally got you back on track?

Unpack It

What stood out to you from Sunday's sermon and why? What was a takeaway or something that left you wondering about?

Historical Context (or just fun facts you may not know)

"Restores" is the Hebrew word, shuv, "to turn back." It's the same word the prophets use for repentance: return to the Lord. David isn't primarily saying "he recharges my battery." He's saying "he turns my soul back around." The word itself is directional.

The "soul" (nephesh) is the whole living self. Not a spiritual compartment, but the entire person, desires, identity, breath, life. When the Shepherd turns the nephesh back, he's reorienting everything about us, not just our feelings.

Genesis frames the whole story. In Genesis 1, God brings order out of what is "formless and empty" and creates humanity in his image, identity received before anything was accomplished. In Genesis 3, sin doesn't erase that image; it disorients it. Adam and Eve hide, cover, fear, and blame. Psalm 23:3 is the Shepherd's answer to Genesis 3: he turns us back.

Diving In

Read together: Psalm 23

Diving Deeper

- 1) "Restores" (shuv) literally means "to turn back," the same word used for repentance. How does knowing that change the way you hear "he restores my soul"? Is restoration more about rest or about direction?
- 2) Sheep trails in the wilderness often lead to dead ends or cliffs, and sheep can't tell the difference. What does this image say about our ability to find the "right paths" on our own?

- 3) "For his name's sake" meant the shepherd's reputation was tied to his flock. How does it change things to know God has staked his own name on leading you well?
- 4) "The soul becomes exhausted whenever it asks something other than God to tell it who it is." What are you most tempted to ask for your identity: career, success, relationships, appearance, reputation, ministry, achievement? How is that working?
- 5) Look at this list: Prayer before productivity. Presence before performance. Family before ministry. Being before doing. Identity before accomplishment. Which pair is most out of order in your life this season?
- 6) "The more life revolves around me, the more disoriented I become. The more life is oriented around the Shepherd, the more fully I become who God created me to be." Where have you seen that play out, for better or worse?
- 7) Like a cast sheep, sometimes we can't get ourselves right side up. Is there an area of your life where you've been trying to "get your life together" on your own, when what you actually need is to let the Shepherd find you?
- 8) 1 Peter 2:25 says, "Once you were like sheep who wandered away. But now you have turned to your Shepherd, the Guardian of your souls." The conclusion isn't "try harder to center your life on God," it's "the Shepherd is here." What would it look like this week to stop striving and simply follow?

Closing It Out With Prayer

1. Begin with a moment of silence. Invite each person to quietly ask themselves: What have I been asking to tell me who I am? Name it privately before God.
2. Have each person share one word for where they need the Shepherd to reorient them this week (identity, priorities, direction, rest, trust), no explanation required and pray briefly for each other.