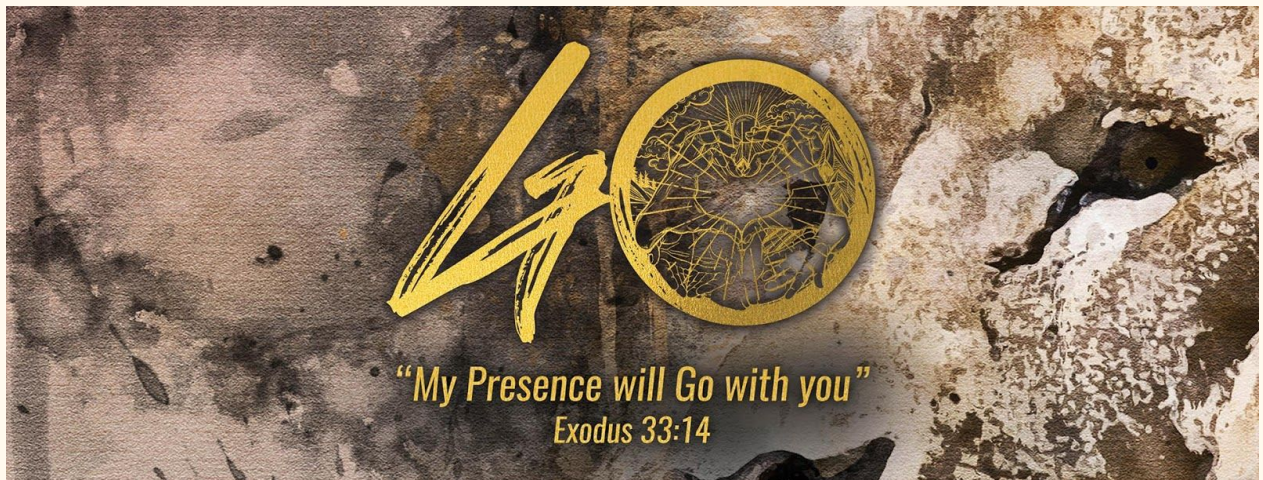

Ignite

“Lord, in volatility, grant us confidence in your unshakable love. In uncertainty, grant us the ability to surrender to Your will and may Your kingdom come. In complexity, let us persevere in Your simple command to ‘trust and obey’. In ambiguity, to receive the clarity that is found in Your Word. This day we pray for these, Amen.”



SERMON SUMMARY

Note to Word Facilitator: The sermon notes below is a summary of the sermon. You may choose to further summarize it according to the needs and context of your CG members. The goal is not just to go through it “verbatim” but to prepare well, allowing members to recall and engage the message in the best possible way.

Living in Turbulent Times: Overcoming Anxiety, Fear and the Future

Pastor Dato’ Dr Daniel Ho

Psalm 23:1-6

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not be in want. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he restores my soul. He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, 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 goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Introduction

We are living in times of fear and uncertainties in the midst of this pandemic. What do we do? How do we respond? Over the course of this turbulence, we can still overcome our anxieties, worries and fears about the future. We can learn from Psalm 23 that David wrote as an application for our lives.

A Place of Provision

Psalms 23 tells us about a place of provision that God offers to you and me.

- God our shepherd who meets all our needs **Psalm 23:1, Philipians 4:19**

God meets all of our needs. Whatever anxieties and worries we may have about our needs, God who is our perfect Shepherd will be there to meet our needs, as how a shepherd is there to meet the needs of his sheep.

In what way does He meet our needs? In what way does He provide for us?

- He provides
 - Rest for our bodies **Psalm 23:2a, Mark 6:31**

He knows our bodies need rest. In the midst of green pastures, He makes us lie down. However, due to the uncertainties about the future, we find ourselves unable to do so. We are restless, disconnected and concerned about where this is going to take us to. Our God wants to step in and enable us to rest.

In the midst of Jesus' many ministries, Jesus told his disciples to come aside and take some rest, the rest that all our bodies need so that in it we can find peace and quietness for our lives.

- Refreshment for our spirits *Psalm 23:2b, Acts 3:19*

Water refreshes our spirits. Water strengthens and renews us. At the Beautiful Gate where a crippled man was healed, Peter took the occasion to preach repentance so that times of refreshing will come from the Lord Himself. When we are feeling low and weighed down in our hearts and spirits, He wants to come and lift us up to enable us to know that this God is good. He comes to refresh us in a fresh new way.

- Restoration for our souls *Psalms 23:3a, Psalm 62:1*

The soul is the part of our emotions and feelings that is sometimes weighed down because we are isolated and lonely, and if we are not careful, we may even have depressive and suicidal thoughts when we are cut off from everybody. It is in times like these that God breaks through for us to have our souls restored.

In God, there is restedness for our souls. There is restoration, refreshment and renewal that He brings to us in a wonderful manner.

- Righteousness we must exhibit *Psalm 23:3b*

Our God is concerned about truth, justice, righteousness and morality. When He guides us, He always guides us into things that are right, good and true, because it is only from these that we can experience peace, restedness and joy in the Lord. Otherwise, we will do things that are unrighteous.

A Promise of Protection

- No fear even when go through grave danger *Psalm 23:4a*
 - Why *Psalm 23: 4b, 4c, 5a*

Because there is God's presence in our lives; God is with us all the time - with us, in us, for us and around us. We can take comfort knowing that we have a God who remains steadfast, sure and certain.

However, we may sometimes find God distant. It is you and I who have moved, because God has always been the same yesterday, today and forever. He has never moved. You and I need to draw closer to God again to experience His presence.

We also have God's protection. The rod is meant to ward off evil and danger. The staff is to lead and guide the sheep, and also to retrieve sheep which may have fallen into the drain. The staff is meant to lead, guide, direct, help and give us a real sense of direction and purpose in our lives.

Our God comes to provide food for us even in the presence of our enemies. When we are surrounded by enemies, we are never at peace and at rest. We may not have the appetite to eat well. David says that even in light of danger, God will still provide for us - even with food on the table.

In the midst of danger, uncertainties, insecurities and fear about the future, God comes in His presence, protection, and provision for all of us.

- God's anointing *Psalm 23:5b*

God comes and releases His oil - His presence, anointing, favour and hand upon our lives. He goes beyond what we expect of Him; He pours into our lives so that our cups overflow. Here is a God who comes in provision and protection. Hence, we can rest in His peace, assurance and joy.

Practising His Presence

We must practice the presence of God in our lives.

- To know that God is good *Psalm 23:6a*

God's goodness will follow us all the days of our lives. This is why we can rest in God's peace and joy in confidence. Due to this pandemic, we may wonder what the future holds. We are bogged down in so many ways. We must believe that our God is good so that we do not have to worry nor become paranoid by what is

happening around us. We walk in faith and not in fear. We should be confident in this God who loves us and cares for us. His design and destiny for us is always good. We do not have to be crippled by fear, but be able to walk in confidence, faith and trust in this Living God.

- That His goodness and love will follow us all through life *Psalm 23:6a*

We can have the security, assurance and confidence that God's goodness and love will follow us all the days of our lives. We are in God's good hands. Not that we should throw caution to the wind. We must still follow the necessary standard operating procedures as recommended by the government to stay safe during this pandemic. However, beyond this, we walk in faith and trust in the Living God, who determines how long we should live on earth. With the time we have left on this earth, we have to maximise it out for God and for His glory. We should not waste away our time. Everyday matters, so make every day count for the Lord Jesus Christ.

- Desiring to worship God in His house and with His people *Psalm 23:6b*

We must value worship and time with God in His presence, and value joining the people of God in worship. Never miss the opportunity to gather together as God's people in the house of God, even though it may not be possible now. However, we are still able to congregate during the weekends for worship and gather in our cell groups via Zoom. The opportunity to assemble is a huge privilege and blessing, because we keep God at the centre. When God is at the center, everything fades into insignificance. When we put God at the center, we see everything correctly and accurately. Once God is off-center, we see everything in a blur. That is why coming together to worship God is critical especially in times like this, because although we do not know what the future holds, we know Who holds our future. The Lord of the universe holds the whole world in His hands. He holds your life in His hands. We can trust, rejoice and celebrate Him.

Conclusion

In the midst of this pandemic, where anxiety and fear of the unknown and uncertain future creeps up, this God is in charge and in control. We have to step out in faith, in trust, in belief and in confidence. We should continue to reach out to the community and make Jesus known, to draw as many as possible that they may experience the same confidence, peace and joy in God as we do. That they will have assurance about

the future when they encounter Jesus Christ. Lives then, will never be the same again.

This is what we are put on earth to do - to reach out and introduce God as our Shepherd to as many people as possible, so that they will come to experience a place of provision for their lives, the promise of protection and practise the presence of God on a day-to-day basis. This is so that in our hearts, in the thick of turbulence, there is security, rest, peace and joy.

SERMON REFLECTION

'I am sorry to inform you that your pregnancy test came back negative this time.'

Not my first time hearing those words, but they disappoint just as deep, if not deeper than before. After numerous medications taken, countless injections administered, vast amounts of money spent, much emotional turmoil experienced, I was faced with yet another round of failed fertility treatment. I felt lost, confused and abandoned. I was overwhelmed by fear and anxiety. I would wake up in a panic. I was afraid of the future, of lack, of my own inadequacies, and of uncertainties. I began to drown in much negativity and hopelessness.

My faith was hardly set ablaze, but I owned up to being upset – short of being blasphemous - and displayed my raw emotions before my Heavenly Father. I was led to turn to the psalms for comfort. Something happened in me when I began to chew on Psalm 23. Fears began to melt away. Slowly, but surely.

'The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not be in want.' I was anxious about the lack in finances due to the sums of money spent on treatments, in times when people are struggling to make ends meet in this whole Covid-19 fiasco. I was worried about the side effects of the medications, and the absence of peace made me fearful. But what a glorious revelation the Lord gave me! The Lord protects me and provides for me. If

He has said it, then I should take Him at His Word - I will have no lack for peace, finances, health or in any other areas of my life!

My perspective on Psalm 23 shifted as it was further revealed that the Good Shepherd actively does everything for His sheep – ‘He makes me...’, ‘He leads me...’, ‘He refreshes...’, ‘He guides me...’. This begets the next question – am I allowing God to lead me? Do I yield to His leadership as my Good Shepherd? If God is my shepherd, I should give Him control over my life. I need to pray to lead a life of active restfulness in Him.

I noticed David’s writing changed a little in the subsequent verses – David referred to God in the second-person pronoun as ‘You’, when David wrote he walked through the valley of shadow of death. It sounded like David was talking to God face-to-face! This gave me a sense of closeness to God – God is close to the broken-hearted, and is closer to me than ever before in times of darkness. I am thus reminded of my value in God’s eyes. This is the Good Shepherd who actually leaves the 99 to look for the one lost sheep!

Each of us are in different seasons of life, and experiencing varying levels of difficulties in this pandemic.

A sister-in-Christ shared that, due to circumstances consequent to the movement control order, not only did she lose her job of nearly two decades; she suffered from a bout of depression to the point where she could understand why some people may resort to suicide. She praised God for His protection over her mental health. As she moved away from the negativity that had hit her, God began to give her clarity, moving her towards a new direction in her life.

A brother-in-Christ then shared that he also lost his job due to the economic slump. Yet God was faithful to open another door for him as a ride-sharing service provider. Things are still tough sometimes, but he is assured in his heart that God will meet his needs.

I may not have the same perspectives nor understand what others are going through, but because God is the same yesterday, today and forever, He will come

through for us. His faithfulness endures forever and He always keeps His promises to us. We can rest in the loving shelter of His promises.

I believe that the only fear that the Lord wants us to have, is the reverential fear of the Lord. It is my prayer that as sheep in the flock of the Good Shepherd, we will live our lives restfully loved by Him, the Lover and Overseer of our souls.

Contributed by May Ng and The Ignite Team



APPLICATION

Note to Word facilitator:

As you prepare for this session, this is a great time to pray that the Holy Spirit will guide you to use the questions efficaciously. You can select, modify or entirely create your own questions, according to the needs of your CG, especially if you feel that there are too many questions than required for the allocated time. The questions below are crafted with a certain flow in mind. You could use these towards the end or insert them in between your own sermon reflection and summary.

Suggested Icebreaker Question (for Welcome that would link to the Word time)

- Name one thing which stresses you out (which may not stress others out).
- Name an instance when you have felt or faced something frightening.

Suggested questions linked to the main points:

A Place of Provision

- Share some practical ways that you can take in caring for our body, mind (mental health) and soul holistically.
- How well does *'the Lord is my shepherd, I shall not be in want'* resonate with your own relationship with or experience of God? Why do you say that?

A Promise of Protection

- Share a story of how God has protected you from a dangerous or harmful situation.
- Think of a problem which you are facing at the moment or had faced before. To what extent did you depend on your own strength to overcome it? How was it different when you yielded to God for help?

Practising His Presence

- Do you agree that God is always good? What about the time when something bad happened - perhaps you lost a loved one or you went through a messy break-up, or that your exam grades or businesses are in the red, etc. Were you angry with God, as though he owed you only the good things in life? Has your perspective changed ever since these experiences? Why or why not?
- In light of online church services, how has your experience been in worshipping God on a digital platform as compared to physical in-person celebrations? What would it take for you to continue worshipping God, regardless where you are - at home, or in church?

Question Bank *(Extra questions you can use to bring discussion further as you see fit):*

- Does knowing that God protects us mean we can 'throw caution to the wind'? How do we come into a place of protection under the Good Shepherd?
- Think of a time when you were at the 'valley of the shadow of death'. Were you walking through, or camping there? Did the season of despair and discouragement 'blind' you from being led by God?
- What do you think it looks like to have God's "goodness and mercy" in your life?
- Share an instance where you were aware of God's presence in the middle of fear. How did it help you?



WHAT'S YOUR STORY?



Photo by Judit Peter from Pexels

Story of the week...

"My CG has decided to take up the "Bless a Community" project for IMPACT Now. The two areas that we considered were Taman Melawati and Setapak. We decided to do a..."

- Yeoh Beng Kiat, PJN5

* Read the rest of this CG's IMPACT Now story on impactdumc.online/stories

"There is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside you."

- Maya Angelou

If you or your CG member(s) has a story to share related to today's Word or any other story that speaks of His goodness or of IMPACT Now, **share their/your story** [\[HERE\]](#)



PRAYER

Note to CGL: You (or someone you assign this portion to), may lead by praying OR reading these prayers together as a CG during worship.

Budget 2021

Budget 2021 was announced on 6 November and this expansionary budget is primarily drafted to cater to the impact from the prolonged pandemic as many are in need even for daily sustenance. Lives are being affected across the land, especially the B40 group. The economy needs a boost to create enough jobs. In the midst of all these, political uncertainty continues to shroud us.

Budget 2021

- *Provisions in the Budget will be enough to cater to all needy segments of society*
- *Monetary aid to reach those most in need, especially the B40*
- *The Lord will remind His church to trust that He will supply all of our needs*

Economic Boost

- *Rightly directed government spending to fund the relevant sectors of the economy in the new normal*
- *SMEs will weather the economic storm and find a way to generate income*
- *More jobs will be created*

Political Uncertainty

- *Political leaders to work in unity to focus on the needs of the people first, and not in politicking or for self-gain*
- *Right focus at this time as the nation suffers from the effects of the pandemic*

- *Wisdom to lead the nation in uncertain times*




OTHER RESOURCES

Below are some links to resource you. Do **CLICK** on the images below!


FEATURED

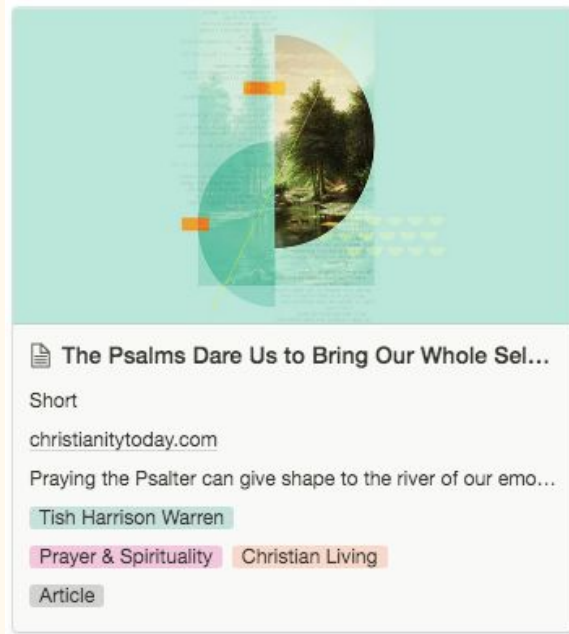
In view of our current changing landscape that affects us individually and corporately, here are some featured resources for you this month!



 **Methodist Prayer**
methodistprayer.org
Methodist Prayer is based on Daily Prayer, the Church of ...
[Prayer & Spirituality](#)
[Website](#)



 **Following Christ in a Pandemic: Philip Yancey**
59 minutes
biologos.org
In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, "science" has be...
[Philip Yancey](#)
[Social Concerns](#) [Christian Living](#)
[Video Clip](#)



OTHER RESOURCES

Discover a host of other resources curated for you here!



DUMC STORIES

Be blessed by a compilation of inspiring DUMC Stories that you can share with others!

