

CrossBridge Christian Church  
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**MESSAGE:** “*God’s Rx for Insecurity*”

**SCRIPTURE:** Psalm 23:6

**SERIES:** 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm

**DATE:** November 30, 2003

Introduction: Today we’re going to conclude our series on Psalm 23 by looking at God’s Rx for Insecurity. In a way, this message is a summary of everything that we have been talking about these past several weeks...because insecurity is at the root of virtually every problem that we face. It’s what causes us to worry about our finances and the safety of our children. It’s what causes us to get overextended & burned out. It’s what causes us to panic when the way is unclear. It’s what causes us to become anxious when we’re in the middle of a dark valley. It’s what causes us to feel vulnerable in the face of our enemies. And it’s also what causes us to question whether or not we’re going to go to heaven when we die. And since all this insecurity is causing so many problems for so many people, we’re not terribly surprised to find a prescription for it in the last verse of this psalm. And just so you know what verse I am referring to, let me read it to you one more time: “*Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.*” Two thoughts come to mind as we look at this verse.

### **I. First, it’s quite obvious that GOD WANTS US TO FEEL TOTALLY SECURE.**

I mean, that comes out loud and clear in the first part of verse 6 . . . because whenever the word “surely” appears, it not only conveys a sense of certainty and passion about what is to follow; but it also refers the reader back to what has just been said. In other words, it’s as if the writer is saying: “Because of what I have been telling you in these previous five verses—because of the way my Shepherd has dealt with my physical, emotional and spiritual insecurities in the past, there can be no doubt that His goodness and mercy will continue to follow me all through my life.” If He did it in the past, surely He will continue to do it in the future; and the reason I know this is because God doesn’t change. He said as much in Malachi 3:6. He said: “*I the Lord do not change.*” He’s the same today as He was yesterday; and He will be the same tomorrow as He is today. And if He has shown Himself to be a God of goodness & mercy in the past, He will continue to be a God of goodness & mercy in the future. And as David reflected on his past experiences with God, there was no doubt in his mind as to what his future experiences would be.

Actually, the word picture that he uses is a picture that anyone familiar with sheep would immediately understand...because, unlike cattle, sheep are always led from the front. But, just to be sure that they don’t wander off and get into trouble, there will always be one or two sheep dogs at the rear, keeping them in line. And what David is saying here is that goodness & mercy are like a couple of divine sheep dogs that “dog” our heels through life when God is our Shepherd. As long as we are following Him, they are following us. And we know they aren’t going to go away . . . because they belong to the Shepherd. And that means wherever He goes, they go. So, if we are following Him, they will be following us.

And when David looked over his shoulder to see what was behind him, he could see how God's goodness and mercy had been dogging his footsteps from the time he was a young boy. He remembered how God's mercy had protected him from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear when he was herding sheep as a teenager. He also remembered how that same mercy had saved him from the sword of Goliath...and later from the spear of a demented King Saul. And then he remembered how years later God had forgiven his sin of adultery with Bathsheba and had wiped the murder of Bathsheba's husband from the books as well. And that just reminded him of all the other times that he had sinned and found God's mercy to be present. And as he looked over his other shoulder, he could see God's goodness providing food and water at crucial times in his military campaigns. And he could see how comforting and reassuring God had been when he lost his son Absalom . . . and how good & faithful God had been in helping him make wise decisions as the leader of his people. And the more he looked at God's goodness and God's mercy in the past, the more certain he became that God's goodness and mercy would be following him all the days of his life. And God wanted him to feel that way . . . because, like any father, God wants His children to feel secure in their Father's love.

And I suspect that if we would take a moment to look back over both of our shoulders, we would come to a similar conclusion . . . because if there is one thing I know—if there is one thing I can always bank on, it's the fact that God doesn't change. And if God's goodness & mercy were following God's flock when David was alive, you can rest assured that they will be following us through all the days of our life as well. Assuming that we are a part of God's flock, that is. If we have decided not to let God be our Shepherd, then obviously we can't expect goodness & mercy to follow us . . . because they're with Him. They're His dogs; and they go where He goes. But, if we have made a decision to accept the Lord as our Shepherd and to let the Shepherd be our Lord, then we know they'll be following us. And if we get threatened by one of our spiritual enemies, they'll be there to chase it away. If we get stung by moral failure or clobbered by personal loss or overwhelmed by financial difficulties, they'll be there to bring whatever it is that we need. They're kind of like a cross between a sheep dog and a St. Bernard in this respect because they not only keep us moving in the direction that God wants us to go, but they also bring us what we need when we need it.

When we need forgiveness, Mercy comes trotting over and gives us a clean slate. When we need comfort or reassurance, Goodness comes over and licks our face. And when we have a material need, Goodness always has a barrel full of solutions for that as well. I remember so many times in my own life when Goodness showed up at just the right time with just the right solution—like the time I didn't have a car or the money to pay for one and a guy I didn't even know very well said he would sell me his for \$1.00. Of course, being the skeptic that I am, I didn't believe him—so he upped the price to \$1.50. But, it was still affordable—so I got what I needed in spite of my lack of faith. And then there was that time when I was pastoring a little country church in Minnesota—and it was getting close to Christmas, and I had a \$70 insurance bill and a \$30 fuel bill that were due; and I was only making \$25 a week . . . so I hollered: “Shepherd, Shepherd, help me out.” And the next thing I knew, Goodness showed up at the door in the form of a stranger who

said: “My name is Enoch Bjugé—and you don’t know me, but I have a tree farm a few miles down the road; and I thought you might like to come down and pick out a tree for Christmas. It’s my treat.” And then he reached into his pocket and pulled out an envelope and said, “Merry Christmas.” And after he had left, I opened the envelope and guess what I found. I found five crisp \$20 bills. Just what I needed to pay my bills. And I looked at my wife and said: “Who was that masked man, anyway?” And then I realized that it was Goodness . . . masquerading as a tree farmer. And he has been following me ever since. And so has Mercy . . . because every time I make a mistake—and I’ve made more than my share, he’s following after me, picking up my messes, putting Humpty Dumpty back together again, making sure that things are working the way they are supposed to—and, instead of getting upset with me, he licks my face. It’s amazing how forgiving he is. But, in a way, I’m not surprised . . . because I have a Dachshund who’s kind of the same way; and she isn’t even a sheep dog—let alone a God dog.

But, I’m just one member of God’s flock; and I’m sure the rest of you have similar stories that you could tell. As we look back over the course of our lives, we see so many evidences of God’s goodness & mercy working on our behalf. At the time, we may not have paid any attention to them. We may not have noticed that they were there. But now, looking back, we can see very clearly how Goodness & Mercy have been following us all through our life...and how they’ve been working everything together for our good—just as God promised. And seeing how consistent God’s goodness and mercy have been, we feel a tremendous sense of security in the knowledge that what has been will be...and that what we experienced in the past we will continue to experience all the days of our life. But, as much as God wants us to feel totally secure about our life here on this earth . . .

## **II. HE also WANTS US TO FEEL SECURE ABOUT OUR FUTURE IN HEAVEN.**

And that’s what the last part of verse 6 is talking about. When David says: “*I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever,*” you know he must be feeling pretty secure about it . . . because he doesn’t say, “Methinks I will be spending eternity in God’s house” or “I certainly hope to be in God’s house some day.” Instead, he says: “I shall be in God’s house.” And that’s the kind of certainty that God wants...because God sent His Son that we might “*have life, and have it abundantly*” (Jn. 10:10), as it says in John 10; and I don’t know about the rest of you, but not having assurance of my salvation in Jesus Christ and not knowing whether I’m going to go to heaven when I die is not my idea of an abundant life. For me, an abundant life is a life without worry. It’s a life that is filled with peace and a life that is free of fear. And how can I have a life that is free of worry and fear if I don’t know whether or not I am going to go to heaven when I die? The plain truth is: I CAN’T! And neither can anyone else. And that’s why God speaks through His servant, John, saying: “*I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life*” (1 Jn. 5:13). “I don’t want you to wonder about it...and I don’t want you to have doubts about it. I want you to know . . . so you can have the peace and the joy and the assurance that Jesus came to give you.” So, apparently it is possible for us to know. The question is: How can we know? How can we be sure? How can we have absolute certainty about our eternal future in heaven?

Well, we can start by looking over our shoulder so we can see who's following us. If it's self-righteousness & self-reliance, we probably have good reason to worry . . . because if we're depending on our own righteousness and our own record of church attendance, prayers & good works to get into heaven, we're never going to make it. Even if we were the best of the best, it wouldn't be enough . . . because, according to the prophet Isaiah, we're all so sin-infected and sin-contaminated that "*all our righteous deeds are like a filthy cloth*" (Isa. 64:6). There is nothing within us or about us that would qualify us for a weekend trip to heaven's gate—let alone an eternity in God's house. So, I hope you don't see self-righteousness and self-reliance "dogging" your footsteps...because they're only going to make your insecurity problem worse instead of better.

But, if you see goodness & mercy following you, that's a different story . . . because "goodness" can also be translated "grace" – and since **GRACE** stands for **GOD'S RICHES AT CHRIST'S EXPENSE**, you are assured of the price of admission. In fact, it's already been paid—and your name is already on the list . . . and your room is already painted and ready for use. I don't know if you have a rose on your pillow...but I have a feeling that isn't going to matter because you're never going to get tired—so there will be no need for you to sleep. But, you will have access to all of God's riches . . . and that's what counts. But, it's not because of anything that you have done. It's because of what Christ has done. And if you have Christ in your life, the Bible says: "You already have eternal life. You don't have to wait until you die and go to heaven to get it. You have it now." That's what John was trying to tell us when he said: "*I am writing these things so you will know that you have eternal life.*" In the verse immediately preceding that, he had said: "*Whoever has the Son has life [right now]; and whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life (I Jn. 5:12).*" And I am telling you this as believers in Jesus Christ so you will know that you are saved . . . and so you will feel secure about your eternal future."

Jesus said basically the same thing when he told His disciples: "*I know my sheep, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand*" (Jn. 10:27-28). In other words, you are eternally secure—not because of your goodness, but because of My goodness. I give you eternal life; and the reason I give it is because that's the only way you can get it. As Paul said: "*...it is by God's grace that you have been saved through faith. It is not the result of your own efforts, but God's gift, so that no one can boast about it*" (Eph. 2:8-9).

But, receiving the gift is one thing; and hanging onto it is another. And that's why we have to depend on God's mercy as well as God's grace. God's grace is what gives us eternal life. God's mercy is what allows us to keep it. After all, if it wasn't for God's mercy, we would have been disinherited as sons and daughters of God a long time ago. And God would have been more than justified in doing it . . . because, as sons & daughters go, we haven't exactly been what you would call 'obedient' or even 'respectful.' Instead of following the example of Jesus, we follow the trends and fads of our culture. Instead of loving our brothers & sisters in Christ, we tear each other apart like wolves. Instead of reaching out to share the Good News with those who haven't heard, we think only of ourselves and of what will be good for us. Instead of making the effort

to spend a few moments each day with God so we can thank Him for His love and tell Him how much we love Him, we practically ignore Him. And this is when we're being good! Because when we're bad, we're really bad! And there isn't anything about us that would make God proud. I mean, if God didn't love us so much . . . and if God's mercy wasn't so great and His faithfulness so far beyond anything we can fathom, He would have divorced us long before now. But, fortunately for us, God isn't like the rest of us. As David said in one of his other psalms: "*He forgives all my sins. He heals me. He ransoms me from hell. He surrounds me with loving-kindness. He fills my life with good things...He is merciful and tender toward those who don't deserve it. He is slow to get angry...He never bears a grudge...He has not punished us as we deserve . . . for HIS MERCY...is as great as the height of the heavens*" (Ps. 103:2-11). And it's HIS MERCY—not our worthiness—that gives us assurance of eternal life and a home in heaven.

If you want to know how secure you are in God's love, just read the story of the Prodigal Son in Luke 15. If ever there was someone who deserved to be disinherited, disowned and disregarded, it was that son. He treated his father like dirt...and broke his heart in the process. But, not once did that father ever think about closing his home or his heart to his son. And not once did he consider re-writing his will and leaving his son out. He may have been an ungrateful son...and he may have been a disobedient and disrespectful son; but he would always be a son. And nothing that son could do would ever change that. In Galatians 4:5 we are told that "*God sent his Son, born of woman, born under the law, in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children.*" According to Roman law (and that's what Paul was living under when he wrote these words), adoption was an irreversible act. Once the adoption had taken place, the parent could not change his mind. He couldn't decide five or ten years down the road that he had made a terrible mistake and that he would, therefore, disinherit the adopted child...or that he would take him back to Social Services and have him placed with another family. This simply wasn't possible under Roman law. The only way that an adopted son or daughter could ever become "unadopted" under the law was if the adopted child formally repudiated his or her adoptive family . . . thereby giving up all claim to the family name and the family fortune. And what Paul wants us to understand is that the same thing applies to our relationship with God. Having adopted us into His family and having given us a new name and all the privileges that go with that name, God cannot and will not turn us away—no matter how sinful and disobedient we become.

But, what He will do is sic His faithful dog "Mercy" on us. And Mercy will "dog" our heels and yip at our conscience and remind us night and day that we have a Shepherd who is looking for us. And he won't let us rest until we do what the Prodigal Son did and come back where we belong. A long time ago, a man who had been a drunken, destitute drug addict wrote a poem about this very experience—and he entitled it, interestingly enough, *THE HOUND OF HEAVEN*. Because of its universal appeal, it has been translated into more than 60 languages; and even though you may not be guilty of the same kinds of sins as the man who wrote it, I'm sure you will identify with its message as soon as you hear the words. Listen as I read them to you.

*I fled him, down the nights and down the days;  
I fled him down the arches of the years.  
I fled him down the labyrinthine ways  
of my own mind, and in the midst of tears  
I hid from him, and under running laughter.  
Up vistaed hopes I sped; and shot, precipitated,  
adown titanic glooms of chasmed fears,  
From those strong feet that followed, followed after.  
But with unhurrying chase and unperturbed pace.  
Deliberate speed, majestic instancy, they beat—  
and a voice beat more instant than the feet—  
'All things betray thee, who betrayest me.'*

And that's why you will never have to worry about losing your salvation—because when the Hound of Heaven is on your trail, there is no escape. Sooner or later, he will track you down and bring you back to the arms of your loving Shepherd. And when he does, you will hear the Shepherd say: "My child, I love you. I have given you eternal life; and no one will ever snatch you out of my hand. So, you might as well get used to the idea that you are mine...and quit wandering off. Besides, there is so much that I want to give you; and I can't give it to you if you're always running away. So, trust me with your present as well as your future. Trust me to be your Shepherd—and I will never ever let you down."

Conclusion: And with that, we conclude our series of messages on the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm. The question is: "What have we learned from it?" If I had to sum it up in one statement, it would be: "Jesus is all you need. You don't need anything else." And if I had to paraphrase the entire psalm and put it in my own words, it would probably go something like this:

If I know the shepherd, I don't have to fear anything. I don't need to fear poverty because the Lord is my shepherd—and that means I have everything I need. I don't need to fear loneliness, for He is with me. I don't need to fear mistakes, for He guides me on the right path. I don't need to fear failure, for He restores my soul. I don't need to fear the future, because goodness and mercy are going to follow me all the days of my life. I don't need to fear death, because I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

God is beneath me in green pastures. He is beside me in still waters. He is with me in the valley. He is around me in the presence of my enemies. He's upon me anointing my head with oil. He is before me leading me in the right paths. He is behind me with His goodness and mercy. He's beyond me in heaven where I will dwell with Him forever.

And knowing this to be the case, what more could I possibly want? As I said: Jesus is all you need. The Good Shepherd provides protection, provision, peace, providence, paradise and, most important of all, His loving presence. And if you haven't been part of His flock, you've been missing something. No, let me rephrase that: You've been missing everything. So, I encourage you to do something about that right now by asking Christ to be your Shepherd and by telling Him that you're ready to accept the life that He came to give you. Let us pray.

# GOD'S Rx FOR INSECURITY

Psalm 23:6

Introduction: Insecurity is a “disease” that affects a great many people.

## I. GOD WANTS US TO FEEL \_\_\_\_\_ SECURE.

*“Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life” (Ps. 23:6a).*

A. Our security rests on the fact that God doesn't \_\_\_\_\_.

*“I the Lord do not change” (Mal. 3:6).*

*“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever” (Heb. 13:8).*

B. Our security is based on two aspects of God's personality.

1. God's \_\_\_\_\_ assures us that our needs will be met.

2. God's \_\_\_\_\_ assures us that our sins will be forgiven.

C. Our security depends on the fact that we are a part of God's \_\_\_\_\_.

## II. GOD WANTS US TO FEEL \_\_\_\_\_ SECURE.

*“ . . . and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever” (Ps. 23:6b).*

A. Our security is very important to God.

Jesus: *“I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly” (Jn. 10:10).*

*“I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life” (I Jn. 5:13).*

B. Our security is based on who is following us.

1. We have reason to feel insecure if \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ are following us.

*“...all our righteous deeds are like a filthy cloth” (Isa. 64:6).*

2. We have reason to feel secure if \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ are following us.

(cont. on back)

God's \_\_\_\_\_ is what allows us to have eternal life.

**G-R-A-C-E = God's \_\_\_\_\_ at Christ's \_\_\_\_\_.**

*“Whoever has the Son has life; and whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life” (I Jn. 5:12).*

*“My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand” (Jn. 10:27-28).*

*“...it is by God's grace that you have been saved through faith. It is not the result of your own efforts, but God's gift, so that no one can boast about it” (Eph. 2:8-9).*

C. God's \_\_\_\_\_ is what allows us to keep eternal life.

*“He forgives all my sins. He heals me. He ransoms me from hell. He surrounds me with loving-kindness. He fills my life with good things...He is merciful and tender toward those who don't deserve it. He is slow to get angry...He never bears a grudge...He has not punished us as we deserve...for HIS MERCY...is as great as the height of the heavens” (Ps. 103:2-11).*

*“God sent His Son, born of woman, born under the law, in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children” (Gal. 4:5).*

Conclusion: Jesus is all you need. You don't need anything else.