



*"The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake" -Psalm 23:1-3*

"When the going gets tough, the tough get going." Or at least that's what Beth had heard. And life sure was tough now. Beth had started at a new school as a senior in high school. She had begged and pleaded with her parents not to take the new job, just to give it one more year. But it wasn't to be, apparently. So here she was, restarting at the very last minute it seemed. In classes with people who all knew each other. She couldn't wait to get the year over and move onto the next adventure: going into training to join the carpenter's union. She had always loved craftsmanship and working not only with tools, but with God's creation as well. Plus, she loved a good rebuilding project. Maybe one day she'd get an HGTV show herself! It didn't hurt that her Savior had been a carpenter as well. "Take that, lawyers!" Beth often commented.

Shop class was her one refuge. She was able to just create, and it didn't matter that she was hundreds of miles away from what she considered home. In shop class, she was able to simply get going. Because that's what the tough do, apparently, when the going gets tough. Get. Going. She wished she could get going farther away. Because everything had changed.

Even her church was different. This church was smaller than the one she considered home. It wasn't modern-looking, but that was the one thing she didn't mind. In fact, she kind of liked it because of the craftsmanship. The communion rail in particular was beautifully crafted out of wood. The pews were of a similar wood, but they weren't as comfortable to sit in for long periods of time, which Beth didn't like as much.

One Sunday, her new pastor was talking about the Twenty-Third Psalm. Beth figured it was because he was in a bind and needed something familiar to preach on. Everyone knew Psalm 23! She pictured, as she always did, the sheep in the green pasture, and she longed to get away, to get back home so *her* soul could be restored. Or even to get away back to the workshop. But the kindly old pastor interrupted her thoughts and daydreams, as he confidently shared with the congregation: "*This* is where God restores your soul! At this font, at this rail, through these words of the Lord." When Beth was kneeling at that rail a few minutes later and her pastor spoke the promise of God to her, "This is the body of Christ, given for *you*" she understood what the sermon had been about. This, far more than her old home, her workshop, or any green pastures in all of creation, was where God was restoring her soul. She loved a good rebuilding project, and was just now realizing that she had been a part of one all along. God was continuing to rebuild her through Word and Sacrament week in and week out, and that was never going to change. And she realized that the famous saying was wrong. When the going was tough, perhaps instead of "get going", she just needed to rest. To be restored. To worship.

As the year progressed, Beth began to settle in at the new school. God was indeed faithful to His promises and was with her as she continued to receive His gifts. It wasn't a smooth road, but she wasn't traveling it alone. For her senior project in shop class, Beth decided to make a wood-carving of her new church. And on it, she engraved, "He restores my soul" because that church, not in shop class or anywhere else, was where that restoration truly happened. For even in this unexpected life transition, a change that she still wasn't sure she ever would have chosen, God was at work. He was rebuilding and restoring Beth, and had placed her in a position to be able to witness that restoration to everyone in her class as they looked at her project, and she knew that would continue far in the future. All because of a carpenter, her Savior Jesus, who on a piece of wood had crafted the greatest masterpiece ever known: the forgiveness of sins. For Beth. And for you too.

**Prayer:** Lord, thank you for pouring your gifts of forgiveness, life, and salvation into me in so many ways: baptism, communion, absolution, your Word, your people. Help me to center my life around this rebuilding worship. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

**Journal Prompts:**

-What are your reflections on worship being the main place where God restores your soul?

-How many different ways does God deliver you His good gifts in worship? How can you respond in thanksgiving for those gifts?