

Lent 3 / March 8, 2026

Psalm 95

“He is our God and we are the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand.”

The Sheep of His Pasture

Psalm 95 is a call to the faithful of Israel to gather for worship in the presence of the Lord. The worship leader calls, *“Oh come, let us sing to the Lord; let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation.”* The faithful respond saying, *“Let us come into His presence with thanksgiving; let us make a joyful noise to Him with songs of praise!”* The faithful in Israel had good reason to make a joyful noise to the Lord and much for which to offer Him praise. The Lord is the great and in truth, the only God. He is the Creator of the heavens, the earth and all that is in them. His singularity and power are displayed in His control of the forces of nature, in particular the waters of the great deep. The psalmist sings, *“The sea is His, for He made it.”* He made it! He controls it!

Nothing on earth is more uncontrollable than the sea. Humans can divert streams, dam rivers and channel water, but no one can control the sea. When sea levels rise the only recourse of coastal inhabitants is to move to higher ground. In the time of Noah, the only recourse was to repent and get into the ark. Jesus showed His divine authority by commanding the sea. When He spoke the waters of sea became placid. In the psalms God is described as treading on the waters of the sea. Jesus displayed His divinity when He came to the disciples at night walking on the sea. With the faithful of ancient Israel we rest in the protection of the Creator of the heavens, the earth and the sea. We rest in the Lord Jesus Christ. Oh come, let us sing to the Lord. Let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation!

The faithful in Israel received from the Lord, provision for their needs of body and soul. The Lord was their Shepherd. They were the sheep of His hand, the people of His pasture. Shepherds weren't the most influential people in ancient Israelite society. However, they provided an essential service in an agrarian economy. They cared for and protected the sheep from which the people received wool for their garments, food for their stomachs and forgiveness for their sins. The sheep they watched provided for their physical needs and were an integral part of the sacrificial system. Through sheep the Lord provided food for His people, clothing for their bodies and forgiveness for their souls. The sheep sacrificed in the Jerusalem temple were a sign of God's mercy, a symbol of His forgiveness and a

pledge of His promise to protect them from their enemies and keep them safe in His care.

The sheep of ancient Israel were a sign pointing towards the forgiveness God ultimately accomplished for all people in the sacrifice of Jesus, the Lamb of God, for the sins of the world. Like the faithful in Israel, we too have much to give thanks for and good reason to praise God. He continues to provide for our physical needs, but most importantly He provides for our greatest spiritual need, forgiveness and inclusion among the people of Israel. For the sake of Jesus, the Lamb who was slain, we too are the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand. Oh come, let us sing to the Lord. Let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation!

When Israel gathered for worship in the temple courts, later also in local synagogues, the first thing they remembered and celebrated after the power and singularity of the Lord above all other gods, was His salvation. The psalmist sang, *"Let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation."* Why rocks? Well, perhaps, because there are rocks everywhere in the holy land. I don't think I've seen a rockier more barren looking place than the middle east in general and the land of Israel in particular. When the faithful in Israel saw a rock, they remembered the Lord. Rocks are symbols of strength, because they are hard. Rocks are symbols of power, because they were used as weapons. Rocks were symbols of immovability when they were big. The biggest rocks are the mountains, which were signs and symbols of God's love, steadfast and immovable.

On two occasions in the wilderness the Lord provided water for Israel from the most unlikely of sources, rocks. In Exodus 17, fresh out of Egypt, the people of Israel quarreled with Moses because they were thirsty. The Lord told Moses to strike the rock at Mount Horeb. He did and water flowed out of the rock. The Rabbis had the tradition that the rock followed Israel in the wilderness throughout their years of wandering. Paul interpreted that tradition as referring to Christ. Christ is the Rock of our salvation. He gives the water of eternal life. As He told the Samaritan woman at the well, the water He gives wells up to a spring of eternal life. Oh come, let us sing to the Lord. Let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation!

As much as Israel of old celebrated the salvation God gave their ancestors from the Egyptians, we celebrate an even greater salvation in Christ Jesus. He is the rock of our salvation from a bondage greater than Egyptian slavery. In Christ, God delivers us from slavery to sin, the dominion of the devil and lifts from our heads the condemnation of eternal death. Rocks are symbols of strength, power,

faithfulness and steadfastness. What was symbolized and represented by rocks in the Old Testament is expressed in reality in Christ Jesus. He is the ultimate sign of God's steadfast love, His forgiveness and His faithfulness. Whenever you see a rock, remember the Lord Jesus. Make a joyful noise to Him. He is the rock of our salvation.

Many times, in the wilderness Israel tested the Lord, one of which the psalmist mentions in our psalm, saying, when you hear His voice, *"Do not harden your hearts, as at Meribah, as on the day at Massah in the wilderness."* The Lord was faithful both to discipline Israel, so they would not sin and to forgive their sins. He sent serpents to bite and bring them to repentance. He raised a serpent on pole and gave healing to all who looked at it in faith. The Lord gives the fullest expression of His salvation and His power to protect us from every spiritual enemy in life and bring us through death to eternal life, in Christ Jesus. He provides us with living water which a person make drink and live forever. He is the water of life. He calls us now to come, drink of Him and live. He told the woman at the well, *"If you knew who it is who is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' You would have asked Him and He would have given you living water."* Jesus calls us to come and drink. The water that He gives us becomes a spring of water, welling up to eternal life. Oh come, let us sing to the Lord. Let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation!

Psalm 95 was a song by which the faithful in Israel remembered the unfaithfulness of their ancestors in the wilderness, so they would be careful not to fall into the same trap and temptation. Israel complained against the Lord in the wilderness, because they were suffering from a lack of creaturely comforts. Sometimes we complain against the Lord. Their pilgrimage was hard, but it led to a better place, *"a land flowing with milk and honey."* Instead of looking ahead to the Promised Land, they looked at the hardships on the way and lost their way. If Israel would have trusted the Lord when they first entered the wilderness, they would have crossed over the Jordan River and into the Promised land a few months after the exodus from Egypt. Ten times they complained. Ten times they rebelled against Moses and Aaron. Ten times they refused to trust the Lord to provide for their physical needs. Because of their lack of trust and faithlessness, Israel was forty years in the wilderness. In your sufferings think of Jesus, set your eyes on Him. Remember the place He prepares for you in His Father's House.

It is important for believers today to seek the Lord in our troubles and to look beyond our present sufferings, hardships and afflictions to the land God promises to bring us into for the sake of Jesus. The Lord was with His ancient people through

the shepherding of Moses and Aaron. They suffered in the wilderness just like everyone else. God was with Israel through Moses and Aaron. God is with us now through the Lord Jesus. He is the Shepherd of the flock. We are the sheep of His hand. The Lord is closer to us now than He was to His people of old. He has given Jesus to share in our humanity, to live in the wilderness of this world in bondage to sin, under the dominion of the devil and the condemnation of death. He leads us along righteous paths. He leads us to springs of living water. He is the water of life He calls us to drink deeply through faith. He leads us into His Father's house to live in His presence forever.

Jesus is our God. We are the people of His pasture, the sheep of Hand. Jesus says that no one will be able to snatch us out of His hand. All we need do is listen to His voice. We listen to Jesus in the hard times of our lives, so that we do not harden our hearts as the faithless in Israel did so many times in the wilderness and even in the land of promise. The Psalmist sings, *"Today if you hear His voice do not harden your hearts."* We listen to Jesus. He is the rock of salvation. He is the faithful rock who accompanies throughout our lives that He may give us encouragement, hope and lead us to eternal life. Oh come, let us sing to the Lord. Let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation!