



The relevance of Psalm 23 for people after natural disasters in Central Sulawesi

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Abstract: Human life moves forward, but no one knows for sure. Likewise, the people never realized that they would experience the events of September 28, 2018, in Central Sulawesi. These events are cases of three types of natural disasters: earthquakes, tsunamis, and liquefaction. These natural disasters caused significant suffering to them. Nevertheless, the memoirs about this incident reminded them of God's nature and attitude as a faithful shepherd, as expressed in the faith of Psalm 23. This research aims to analyze the relevance of Psalm 23 for people after natural disasters in Central Sulawesi. This research used a qualitative method that involved data collection through observation, interviews, and a survey with a questionnaire. The researcher found that natural disasters made them suffer from fear, loss, and anxiety, but God's providence was always evident for them to bounce back. Psalm 23 was relevant to people's experiences after natural disasters in Central Sulawesi. That can be seen from the awareness of God's grace, which continues to care for them. Efforts to survive, recover, and develop are concrete manifestations of God's help for them. The common point between the Psalmist in Psalm 23 and the survivors of the Central Sulawesi natural disasters are existential experiences of God's existence.

Keywords: Central Sulawesi, people, post-natural disasters, Psalm 23

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1. Introduction

People have changing life dynamics. As time goes on, they experience life through various activities. They feel the joys and sorrows behind existing life. On the one hand, they experience pleasure and can also experience misery on the other hand. They live in the present towards the future but do not know what the future will be like. Living looking to the future indicates hope amid mysterious circumstances. They hope life will contain pleasure, but the opposite can also be the reality. That happened to people who experienced the events of September 28, 2018, in Central Sulawesi.¹

People live with hope, but no one thought natural disasters would occur on September 28, 2018. These events are identified with three types of natural disasters:

¹ Otniel Aurelius Nole, "Folklore on Kayori: An Oral Tradition about Natural Disasters in Central Sulawesi," *Mudra: Jurnal Seni Budaya* 39, no. 4 (2024): 463–70, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.31091/mudra.v39i4.2841>.

earthquakes, tsunamis, and liquefaction.² Natural disasters occurred in many locations in Central Sulawesi. People experienced an earthquake in Palu, Donggala, and Sigi, but several areas in Central Sulawesi also felt its effects. Initially, the earthquake hit several places in the province and, as a result, caused a tsunami and liquefaction.³ Tsunami locations generally occur in Palu Bay and around the coast,⁴ then Petobo and Balaroa sub-districts, as well as Jono Oge and Sibalaya villages are the most severe liquefaction locations.⁵

Due to the natural disasters that occurred on September 28, 2018, people experienced many hardships,⁶ including losing material objects and goods. People feel sorrow because of the departure of their closest family members, some whose whereabouts were not found. They also really need primary and secondary needs on the day after natural disasters occur. On the other hand, natural disasters leave traumatic experiences and psychological disorders for those who survive.⁷ Previous research explains that those who live after natural disasters become individuals who recover from adversity, learn from experience, and adapt.

Research by Pelupessy, Hartono, and Yang explains that a sense of togetherness is the most decisive factor in women's psychological well-being as natural disaster survivors who are displaced.⁸ Then, Razy, Sugandi, and Fedriansyah researched natural disaster survivors who carried out resilience during the pandemic

² Rajindra et al., "Diversity, Resilience, and Tragedy: Three Disasters in Palu of Indonesia," *International Journal of Innovation, Creativity and Change* 5, no. 2 (2019): 1592–1607.

³ Nazeel Sabah and Arjun Sil, "A Comprehensive Report on the 28th September 2018 Indonesian Tsunami along with Its Causes," *Natural Hazards Research* 3, no. 3 (2023): 474–86, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nhres.2023.06.003>.

⁴ Nia Kurniadin and Feri Fadlin, "Analisis Perubahan Morfologi Garis Pantai Akibat Tsunami Di Teluk Palu Menggunakan Data Citra Sentinel-2," *Geoid: Journal of Geodesy and Geomatics* 16, no. 2 (2021): 240–47.

⁵ Vania Qanita Damayanti et al., "Mitigasi Bencana Dan Peran Kearifan Lokal Melalui Sesar Palu-Koro Dan Sesar Lembang," *Cinematology* 1, no. 3 (2021): 109–23; Eka Yudha Saputra, "Setahun Gempa Palu, Desa Bekas Likuifaksi Seperti Desa Mati," *Tempo*, 2019, <https://dunia.tempo.co/read/1249119/setahun-gempa-palu-desa-bekas-likuifaksi-seperti-desa-mati>.

⁶ Otniel Aurelius Nole, Yulius Yusak Ranimpi, and Tony Tampake, "Relevansi Ajaran Teodisi Dan Kesejahteraan Spiritual Pada Penyintas Trauma Bencana Alam Di Palu," *Jurnal Ilmiah Religiosity Entity Humanity (JIREH)* 6, no. 1 (2024): 73–87, <https://doi.org/10.37364/jireh.v6i1.212>.

⁷ Muthia Aryuni, "Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Pada Penyintas Bencana Ganda," *KINESIK* 10, no. 1 (2023): 113–31, <https://doi.org/10.22487/ejk.v10i1.753>; Miranti Florencia Iswari, "Kegawatdaruratan Psikologis Berupa Tingkat Stres, Kecemasan Dan Depresi Korban Gempa, Tsunami Dan Likuifaksi Di Wilayah Pantoloan Kabupaten Donggala Palu Sulawesi Tengah," *Masker Medika* 8, no. 1 (2020): 46–52, <https://doi.org/10.52523/maskermedika.v8i1.377>; Siti Hajar Salawali et al., "Posttraumatic Growth in Adolescent Survivors of Earthquake, Tsunami, and Liquefaction in Palu Indonesia: A Phenomenological Study," *Pediatric Reports* 12 (2020), <https://doi.org/10.4081/pr.2020.8699>.

⁸ Dicky Pelupessy, S. S. Budi Hartono, and Yurik Yang, "Kesejahteraan Psikologis Dan Rasa Kekomunitasan Pada Perempuan Penyintas Bencana Alam Yang Mengungsi," *Jurnal Sains Psikologi* 9, no. 1 (2020): 46–56, <https://doi.org/http://dx.doi.org/10.17977/um023v9i12020p46-56>.

based on individual, social, and spiritual support factors.⁹ Furthermore, Wiwin and Nuraedah researched natural disaster survivors who adapted, having social value as a form of interaction with others and economic value as survival.¹⁰ Next, research by Gultom, Hasibuan, and Patria explains the enthusiasm of local communities who participate in developing mangrove plants as a form of disaster mitigation.¹¹

The term natural disasters is often associated with a perspective regarding the event itself. Meanwhile, victims of natural disasters are individuals who remember the existence of God. Regarding remembering God, it is a thought process tied to memory.¹² People realize that God is present in the lives of those who suffer and provides healing. In this regard, David also realized God's presence in his life, one of which is reflected in Psalm 23. The text explains God's providence in the psalmist's life experiences and is a favorite reading for modern society. However, how is God's providence according to survivors of natural disasters in modern society?

The researcher argues that God's providence strengthens the communities after natural disasters in Central Sulawesi, helping them make sense of life's opportunities, which they view as God's grace, as expressed in Psalm 23. Unlike previous research, this article aims to analyze the relevance of Psalm 23 for people after natural disasters in Central Sulawesi.

2. Research Methods

This research was based on a qualitative method with a case study design. The researcher collected data through observation, interviews, and a survey with a questionnaire for Christians who experienced the events of September 28, 2018. With observation, the researcher simply observed situations, objects, and people.¹³ Next, interviews served as an essential approach to gaining insight into human beliefs and experiences.¹⁴ Then, through a survey, the researcher attempted to obtain

⁹ Muhammad Fakhur Razy, Yogi Suprayogi Sugandi, and Muhammad Fedriansyah, "Resiliensi Masyarakat Penyintas Bencana Di Masa Pandemi Covid 19:," *Jurnal Sosiologi Andalas* 8, no. 2 (2022): 176–91, <https://doi.org/10.25077/jsa.8.2.176-191.2022>.

¹⁰ Wiwin Wiwin and Nuraedah Nuraedah, "Adaptasi Sosial Ekonomi Pengungsi Bencana Likuifaksi Di Kelurahan Balaroa Kecamatan Palu Barat Kota Palu," *Jurnal Pendidikan Geosfer* 7, no. 1 (2022): 16–26, <https://doi.org/10.24815/jpg.v7i1.25807>.

¹¹ J. E. I. Gultom, H. S. Hasibuan, and M. P. Patria, "Local Communities Participation in Mangrove Management for Tsunami Disaster Mitigation at Palu City Coastal," in *IOP Conference Series: Earth and Environmental Science*, vol. 940, 2021, 1–8, <https://doi.org/10.1088/1755-1315/940/1/012084>.

¹² Otniel Aurelius Nole, "Prinsip Hidup Yang Mengingat Tuhan: Studi Hermeneutik Terhadap Yakobus 4:13-17," *CARAKA: Jurnal Teologi Biblika Dan Praktika* 4, no. 2 (2023): 326–40, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.46348/car.v4i2.223>.

¹³ Umesh Kumar Bhayyalal Dubey and D. P. Kothari, *Research Methodology: Techniques and Trends* (Boca Raton: CRC Press, 2022), 137.

¹⁴ Tanya Marie Luhrmann, "Interview Methods," in *The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in the Study of Religion*, ed. Steven Engler and Michael Stausberg, 2nd ed. (Abingdon: Routledge, 2022), 345, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003222491-24>.

information related to a research objective by using a structured questionnaire.¹⁵ The researcher processed a survey that used a questionnaire qualitatively based on open-ended questions. The survey was distributed online using Google Forms. In this section, Google Forms is a modern online survey tool that provides functions to conduct questionnaires based on features that support research.¹⁶

The researcher analyzed the data and conducted theological reflections on Psalm 23, then expressed it in descriptive-interpretative discussions through a socio-theological lens. The researcher undertook theological reflections based on a hermeneutic study as a scientific tool to interpret the text and derive its meaning.¹⁷ In addition, the researcher also utilized theological references that were relevant to the research variables. The following research flow was to describe the significance of Psalm 23 first and then present theological reflections. Furthermore, the researcher explained reflections after natural disasters relevant to Psalm 23. Finally, the researcher emphasized the contents of this article in the conclusion.

3. Results and Discussion

Significance of Psalm 23

The Book of Psalms is often liked by people and is considered necessary to become part of the worship liturgy, whether recited or sung. If most Bible is read as God's words addressed to humans, then the Psalms are read as humans' words to God.¹⁸ About a third of the Hebrew Bible is written in poetic form, which is undoubtedly different from poetry in general, as the Psalms are Hebrew poetry that involves parallelism.¹⁹ On the other hand, the Psalms characterize forms categorized as praise, lament, and wisdom,²⁰ and appear to reflect the call of the psalmist's prayer.

¹⁵ Michael Stausberg, "Surveys and Questionnaires," in *The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in the Study of Religion*, ed. Steven Engler and Michael Stausberg, 2nd ed. (Abingdon: Routledge, 2022), 461, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003222491-32>.

¹⁶ M. S. D. P. Nayak and K. A. Narayan, "Strengths and Weakness of Online Surveys," *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences* 24, no. 5 (2019): 33–35, <https://doi.org/10.9790/0837-2405053138>.

¹⁷ Craig G. Bartholomew, *Introducing Biblical Hermeneutics: A Comprehensive Framework for Hearing God in Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015); Jeannine K. Brown, *Scripture as Communication: Introducing Biblical Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007); Otniel Aurelius Nole, "Kehadiran Perempuan Bagi Anak: Studi Hermeneutik Feminis Terhadap Keluaran 1:8–2:10," *SCRIPTA: Jurnal Teologi & Pelayanan Kontekstual* 16, no. 2 (2023): 162–70, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.47154/sjtpk.v16i2.215>; Otniel Aurelius Nole, "Hubungan Umat Dan Pemerintah: Studi Hermeneutik Terhadap Roma 13:1-7," *HUPERETES: Jurnal Teologi Dan Pendidikan Kristen* 4, no. 2 (2023): 140–54, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.46817/huperetes.v4i2.174>.

¹⁸ Robert D. Miller II, *Understanding the Old Testament* (Chantilly, Virginia: The Great Courses, 2019), 118.

¹⁹ Stephen L. Harris and Robert L. Platzner, *The Old Testament: An Introduction to the Hebrew Bible*, 2nd ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2008); Miller II, *Understanding the Old Testament*.

²⁰ Andrew E. Hill and John H. Walton, *Survei Perjanjian Lama* (Malang: Gandum Mas, 2008).

If we trace the contents of the Psalms, there are Psalms from David and those related to other individuals.²¹ The Book of Psalms consists of separate poetry composed over a certain period by several people, collected in small pieces from different times, then arranged in stages based on a particular theological agenda, and becomes a more extensive work.²² Specifically, Psalm 23 is a message conveyed by David.²³ Psalm 23 represents David's experience as a shepherd in terms of work and as king.²⁴ From this, David also realized that his life journey involved being shepherded by God, so David, as king, understood his position as a sheep cared for by the Shepherd.²⁵

In the Psalms, the use of metaphors about God is a common thing to find, as David calls God a shepherd, which is like a sheep that is entirely dependent on the shepherd for its care and protection, as well as humans are utterly dependent on God.²⁶ David looked at his past as a shepherd and reflected on it to become an understanding that acknowledged God's care as a shepherd.²⁷ David made an analogy of God with a shepherd because of the basis of his experience; however, he lived between the happiness of success, challenges, and suffering, and he still experienced God's statement. The shepherd is tasked with guiding, directing, and providing basic needs for his sheep; thus, God's goodness remains constant.

Theological Reflections on Psalm 23

David's expression in Psalm 23 contains a profound statement about who God is and how God shows this nature to the people. From the beginning, including in his election and anointing as king, especially throughout his journey, David generalized that God was the source of his life.²⁸ David paid great attention to the existence of a genuine God. In particular, the statement in the text also indicates a form of faith expressed through praise or doxology for the goodness of God, who continues to preserve it. Even though life has challenges, David felt he did not lack because God was a good shepherd. That confirms that David was both a king and a sheep, utterly

²¹ Tremper Longman III Raymond B. Dillard, *An Introduction to the Old Testament*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006).

²² Hill and Walton, *Survei Perjanjian Lama*.

²³ Richard M. Davidson, "The Shepherd and the Exegetes: Hermeneutics through the Lens of Psalm 23," *Faculty Publications* 479 (2016), <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/pubs/479>.

²⁴ Annang Asumang, "The Presence of the Shepherd: A Rhetographic Exegesis of Psalm 23," *Conspectus: The Journal of the South African Theological Seminary* 9, no. 3 (2010): 1–24, <https://journals.co.za/doi/10.10520/EJC28249>.

²⁵ Howard N. Wallace, *Psalms* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2009).

²⁶ John H. Walton, Victor H. Matthews, and Mark W. Chavalas, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 515.

²⁷ Wallace F. Johnson, *Following the Good Shepherds* (Mustang, Oklahoma: Tate Publishing & Enterprises, 2010).

²⁸ Yosafat Bangun, *Teladang Sang Gembala Sejati: Mengungkap Pribadi Tuhan Sebagai Gembala Yang Agung Dalam Mazmur 23* (Yogyakarta: ANDI, 2014).

dependent on God, the supreme shepherd.²⁹ David's reflection had a cause: God continued to shepherd him so that he did not need anything.

Psalms 23 proves the shepherd-sheep relationship explicitly, which is shown in the attitude of a shepherd who provides, leads, guides, protects, and cares for his flock.³⁰ It also represents the God-human relationship in every life journey, which is the essence of Psalms.³¹ If we look at the picture of a flock of sheep, then a shepherd does not let his own become pets that live in suffering. Shepherds give the best to their sheep because they are their beloved possessions. Because they are beloved property, the sheep also know who their shepherd is because of habit and closeness, both in sound and treatment. Likewise, David felt that his life was under the care of a shepherd, and he knew that God looked after his life at all times. When David acknowledged that God was his shepherd, he realized that his life as a king was still being shepherded and that he had a leader, namely God. Humility brought David to the realization that God is the supreme king who shepherds.

Verse 2 is proof and the reason David recognizes God as a shepherd. The metaphor lays out a picture of a comfortable life while under the control of a shepherd. The location of the green pasture indicates a place brought and directed by a shepherd to shelter and receive comfort. On the other hand, a shepherd also brings his sheep to calm and refreshing water. Water symbolizes a gift from God that is a relief, and David reflects on how he received water through the shepherding process. The shepherd provides his sheep with good pasture, safe and secure water, and safe and secure pathways.³² In this case, David experienced awareness of the direction guided by God.

The shepherd also has water to refresh his thirsty sheep, so God directs the people to experience refreshment with water. More than that, God's way of refreshing the people's souls can be through His authentic restoration.³³ Likewise, in protection, God guides the people to the right path. Just as a shepherd continues to direct his sheep to stay on a path that does not lead astray, even lost sheep are still sought and found—likewise, God's great concern for humans as beloved possessions.

David realized that the sheep could lose direction, which would lead to a fall, or be in the valley of darkness, which indicated danger. Nevertheless, such problems

²⁹ Desti Samarena, "Wabah Covid 19 Dan Jaminan Perlindungan Allah Dalam Mazmur 23," *Shift Key: Jurnal Teologi Dan Pelayanan* 10, no. 1 (2020): 45–59, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.37465/shiftkey.v10i1.70>.

³⁰ Philip Asura Nggada, "Shepherd Motif in Psalm 23 From an African Perspective : A Textual and Theological Consideration," *Joras* 8 (2018): 81.

³¹ O. Jason Osai, "Psalm 23: A Contemporary Reading of a God-Human Covenant," *Encyclopedia of Bioterrorism Defense* 29, no. 1 (2013): 23–41, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.26593/mel.v29i1.263.23-41>.

³² Walter Brueggemann and William H. Bellinger Jr., *Psalms* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

³³ Max Lucado, *Safe in the Shepherd's Arms: Hope and Encouragement from Psalm 23* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2009).

inspired David, who saw God as his savior. Even though problems like that occur, God is the shepherd who lifts them from the fall and the valley of darkness. God does not allow people to suffer because of these dangers. The point is that God never leads anyone down the wrong path because he always leads on the right path, and God's reputation is to guide on the path of salvation.³⁴ David had a confession of faith that all safe lives exist because of God's presence. God's reasons for being with the people are seen in David's view, which reflects on himself, who was once a shepherd, rod, and staff wielder. These two objects are controls that make the sheep feel safe and comfortable. That is how David views God, who always controls him through comforting power.

Although some scholars believe that the shepherd metaphor is present throughout the Psalms, it seems more reasonable to us that at the end of the Psalms, the image shifts from God as a shepherd to God as a gracious host and provider of hospitality.³⁵ However, verse 5 also reflects the nature and attitude of a shepherd because the shepherd treats his guests in his tent with great respect, even though they are enemies.³⁶ In principle, David, in verse 5, gives an example of God's presence in giving blessings to him during problems. Providing food refers to David's capacity to understand his existence as a king, the nuances of kingship, and a psalmist.³⁷ From this, he reflected that he had been chosen to be king, and behind that election, there was the anointing oil that God had anointed him to be a king, and in the end, David realized his essence as a sheep, too. So, David understood God's goodness with a confession of faith because he was given great attention.

Verse 6 is a reflection that confirms that whoever is under the shepherd's shelter will obtain prosperity. The same thing happened to David when his life relied on God; he also received goodness and mercy. People whom enemies previously chased will be encouraged and protected by God's goodness and steadfast love.³⁸ The subject thinks he is being chased by danger and threats, but in reality, the goodness of God's destiny has been following him and pursuing him.³⁹

In the end, God's house was a peaceful place for David, as it was precious to reside in it (Ps 84:11). If it were not for God, David would be nothing; he would even be someone who was looked down on. In essence, David's success came from God, who shepherded him. Even though David himself was never free from mistakes, he still admitted his mistakes before God.

In the background, David was a shepherd and the son of a shepherd, who later became known as the "Shepherd King" of Israel, stating explicitly, "The Lord is my

³⁴ Allen P. Ross, *A Commentary on the Psalms* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2011), 564.

³⁵ Brueggemann and Bellinger Jr., *Psalms*, 122.

³⁶ James H. Waltner, *Psalms* (Scottsdale: Herald Press, 2006).

³⁷ Wallace, *Psalms*.

³⁸ Waltner, *Psalms*, 129.

³⁹ Brueggemann and Bellinger Jr., *Psalms*, 124.

shepherd,” referring to Yahweh, the God of Israel. Jesus Christ confirmed his statement that the Lord incarnated among humans and stated emphatically, “I am the good shepherd.”⁴⁰ The term good shepherd describes the existence of an all-good God. The statement of Psalm 23 also affirms that God is the friend of the people. On the other hand, in Psalm 23, there is a skillful interaction between elements of individual and communal meaning, that the idea of God is our shepherd and also the shepherd of humankind; for example, Psalm 78:52–53 describes the divine shepherd who led the people from Egypt to the holy land.⁴¹ Therefore, Psalm 23 is very relevant to life’s journey today, one of which concerns life after natural disasters.

Natural disasters are natural facts that cannot be avoided, as people do not know precisely when they will occur. The earthquake in Central Sulawesi did not happen once; there were also follow-ups. Before the events of September 28, 2018, the effects of earthquakes that occurred in Palu often did not pose a considerable risk, so aftershocks were considered normal. Nevertheless, this event became a reminder that there was a significant risk that was never expected due to the influence of aftershocks. A series of earthquakes also caused tsunamis and liquefaction, still felt several hours after everything happened. For people, it is a phenomenon that has consequences, especially when talking about loss and suffering. However, the issue motivates the understanding of God.

As for survivors of natural disasters, they understand that God’s presence is like a shepherd accompanying his sheep. The image of a shepherd shows the nature of being loyal to the sheep, as this is a more accurate view of understanding God’s never-ending faithfulness.⁴² This metaphor strengthens their firm belief that God protects every activity and future goal. Remembering dark events brings them to a time when God allowed them to live and has kept them so far. God is the Sustainer and Guide who enables people to be resilient individually and communally.

Post-Natural Disasters Contemplation

The impact of natural disasters creates fear of tragedy, loss, and anxiety about life in the future. Natural disasters also make people suffer because their needs are minimal. When damage occurs everywhere, social problems arise, such as basic needs

⁴⁰ W. Phillip Keller, *A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 15; Douglas J. Green, “‘The LORD Is Christ’s Shepherd’: Psalm 23 as Messianic Prophecy,” in *Eyes to See, Ears to Hear: Essays in Memory of J. Alan Groves*, ed. Peter Enns, Douglas J. Green, and Michael B. Kelly (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2010).

⁴¹ David T. Adamo, “Reading Psalm 23 in African Context,” *Verbum et Ecclesia* 39, no. 1 (2018): 2, <https://doi.org/10.4102/ve.v39i1.1783>; Phil J. Botha, “Following the ‘Tracks of Righteousness’ of Psalm 23,” *Old Testament Essays* 28, no. 2 (2015): 287, <https://doi.org/10.17159/2312-3621/2015/v28n2a5>.

⁴² Verry Willyam, “Analisis Kata ‘Gembala’ Pada Mazmur 23:1 Dan Implikasinya Dalam Praktik Kepemimpinan Kristen Di Era Disrupsi Teknologi,” *EDULEAD: Journal of Christian Education and Leadership* 4, no. 1 (2023): 66–79, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.47530/edulead.v4i1.138>.

which are difficult to fulfill. One of the basic needs that were difficult to fulfill then was shelter and physical needs. After natural disasters, many were confused about how to survive and almost lost their way because they no longer had personal property, so they were forced to stay with strangers. Those who initially lived at home later became refugees who temporarily settled in a safe place and hoped to receive something useful for the body. Despite this, God is present in their lives to build resilience.

God actively provides survivors of natural disasters with wisdom about survival, permanent housing, and social support. Concerning reflecting on events after natural disasters, it likens God to a shepherd who becomes a host in providing shelter and other needs for survivors of natural disasters. A good host is friendly towards his guests.⁴³ A group of people initially have different backgrounds but become united because God's love connects them. The primary significance is that God's blessing is natural for their lives when there is trouble.

God maintains His authority to send good people to people affected by natural disasters. Blessings are also visible through the presence of capable people and volunteers who bring reinforcements to meet other people's needs in tents or refugee camps. God raises awareness to help each other. God works through the role of government and outside society, who together present human values. This value is in the form of a spirit of solidarity for survivors of natural disasters. This value reflects behavior that provides physical and spiritual needs in refugee camps.

In the current context, development in Central Sulawesi is increasingly improving after natural disasters, although it is still in the process of increasing progress. In the process of this journey, God shepherded the people in a transition to receive a sense of comfort and security, as David reflected on God's truly real shepherding. The context after natural disasters also makes them realize the importance of learning that God takes care of their lives day by day.⁴⁴ The metaphor of a shepherd is defined as a figure who faithfully brings people to change that leads to health and well-being.

Memoirs about natural disasters remind them of how devastating natural disasters are. One example can be understood from students' experience at one of the schools that survived the liquefaction event in Jono Oge. Some ponder the meaning of surviving moving (or walking) soil mixed with mud. In essence, salvation refers to the awareness of God as the good shepherd because he brings them out of danger, experiences God's presence when suffering occurs, and feels the presence of God, who

⁴³ Silmwanus Gabriel, "'Karena Engkau Besertaku' Sebagai Puncak Alur Mazmur 23 Sebuah Contoh Kasus Emphatic Pronoun," *LOGIA: Jurnal Teologi Pentakosta* 3, no. 1 (2022): 20–36, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.37731/log.v3i1.72>.

⁴⁴ Nole, Ranimpi, and Tampake, "Relevansi Ajaran Teodisi Dan Kesejahteraan Spiritual Pada Penyintas Trauma Bencana Alam Di Palu."

is always there with them. God is the one who guides them when walking and running amid a disaster so that they can survive the disaster. Although initially traumatized by this incident, their lives after natural disasters were strengthened by the belief that now God always cares for and protects every step taken in pursuing goals and dreams regarding the future. God's guidance motivates one not to experience lingering fear and anxiety.⁴⁵ In this sense, God is close to creations that have unwavering faith and do not leave them alone.

Another reflection that arises after natural disasters is the feeling of guilt or sin as if we were lost sheep. Nevertheless, God always seeks and brings people back to Him. That is a form of God's care, which interprets life as an opportunity God gives. Then, some interpret this incident as a belief in God's presence in any condition. On the other hand, the gift of breathing and continuing life is an effort to become a better person. In principle, prayer also strengthens them to acknowledge His greatness and ask for His help.

The act of giving thanks is part of the goodness of God who saved them, but what about the family members they lost? There is a feeling and atmosphere of suffering due to separation from close family. Based on a survey that used a questionnaire, a mother from Palu shared how she experiences God's providence, even though she lost her beloved child. There is indeed a feeling of sadness, but she does not dissolve into sadness, and she does not give up because God, as the good shepherd, continues to support, comfort, and give strength to it—the mother realizes that God always provides sufficient living needs for her husband and other children. Belief in God strengthens the mother that her lost child is in God's loving arms. God blesses and gives strength, health, and success. Belief influences people to reflect on God always existing together with His creation. Theologically, God's faithful love continues to unite people as a community in faith in Him.

4. Conclusion

Natural disasters are natural facts that are historical memoirs for people in Central Sulawesi, particularly the events of September 28, 2018. Essentially, these memories direct them to awareness of God's majesty through His grace in life after natural disasters. Understanding the post-natural disasters context in Central Sulawesi can be interpreted by understanding Psalm 23. This text is relevant to modern society regarding God's providence as a faithful shepherd. The people's resilience, including recovery and development after natural disasters in Central Sulawesi, is valid evidence of God's consistent and persistent love. Existential experiences are the meeting point between the Psalmist in Psalm 23 and the survivors of the Central

⁴⁵ Yudhi Kawangung, Nelci Nafalia Ndolu, and Munatar Kause, "Reinterpretasi Mazmur 23 Sebagai Teks Quantum Affirmasi Healing," *Kurios* 6, no. 2 (2020): 302-17, <https://doi.org/10.30995/kur.v6i2.194>.

Sulawesi natural disasters. In this respect, human beings always describe God's existence based on existential experiences.

The researcher realized that this research certainly had limitations in exploring the post-natural disasters experiences of individuals in Central Sulawesi. Therefore, the researcher recommends further research to create new, exciting, and constructive research, including using perspectives and methods.

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