

Psalm 23

A Shepherd for All Seasons

Today- taking a break from our study in the book of Acts - to unpack this Psalm

A) Here is why? One of the things I like to do as a pastor is talk to our staff and leadership - Pulse

B) Get 15-20 people together - what are you hearing in your spheres of influence - our Body -

C) I met with that group a couple of weeks ago - and the overwhelming feedback I received was this:

1) A lot of people in our body are struggling right now.

D) Struggling with life, culture, economy - Stuff - a lot of people seem overwhelmed.

E) On top of that - I had two different people tell me two weeks ago - that they attempted suicide

Our Study a couple of weeks ago- Pressing - Much prayer

A) Safe to say: There are a lot of people in our church family and in this community - struggling - battling

B) Nehemiah is a great book for that - Join us on Wednesday nights

C) But as myself and our other leaders and pastors committed to pray -

The idea was presented - Pause - Acts - minister to the struggling

A) The Lord put on my heart to focus in on Psalm 23 - this beautiful picture of our Shepherd

B) Calling this study - A Shepherd for all seasons

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

2 He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters.

3 He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness For His name's sake.

4 Yea, 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.

5 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; My cup runs over.

6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me All the days of my life; And I will dwell in the house of the Lord Forever.

Psalm 23 is that classic Psalm that most Christians know by heart -

A) But many people know only in theory - they don't know the truths of this Psalm by experience

B) The Actor and the Pastor ---

1) Many know the Psalm but not the Shepherd

C) Today I want us to take a deep dive into seeing our Shepherd.

The first thing I want you to note about this Psalm is this:

A) David the author of it - experienced great highs and great lows in his walk with God

B) Consider some of his highs - Anointed to be the next King of Israel at around 15 years of age -

1) Shortly after that - Kills Goliath

C) Growing popularity: The people are singing his praises as a Known Warrior -

D) #1 song on the charts - King Saul has slain 1,000's - David 10,000's

1) great Highs - everything is falling into place

Then some LOW lows

A) Saul Jealous - tries to pin him to a wall with his spear

B) Ends up on the run - for 15 years living in Caves - living like a fugitive

C) His best friend is killed - later on his daughter is raped - 3 of his kids die prematurely

D) His oldest son tries to take over the throne and run him out of town!

E) Those are some LOW lows

David knew what it was like to experience pain-difficulty - he knew what it was like to be distressed

A)And yet David penned these words - **The Lord is my Shepherd I shall not want** -

B)NLT - **the Lord is my shepherd I have all that I need!**

C)In other words David learned to find his rest and peace in God as his shepherd.

D)Listen my friends: **Your peace in life isn't found in what you have** - it is found in WHO has you!

I love that David says - The Lord is MY SHEPHERD - not THE / or A SHEPHERD

A)HE IS MY SHEPHERD - there is a sense of ownership in that statement

B)David is saying - My life belongs to my shepherd - I am his and he is mine.

C)Jesus picks up on this imagery in John 10 - He said of himself - I am the Good Shepherd

D)I know my sheep and they know me - they know my voice - my presence.

E)So As we read what David Wrote here in Psalm 23 - we can picture Jesus

Now it is also interesting to me that of all the animals that God made that he could compare humans to

A)God choose to compare us to Sheep -

B)Not some of the strongest animals in the animal Kingdom -

1)Elephants can carry up to 2,000 lbs

C)Or the Eagles that fly majestic in the sky - they can carry up 4x its body weight during flight

D)Or a Tiger - can carry 1200lbs up a tree - more than twice its body weight

1)But God doesn't compare us to any of those

Nor does he compare us to Dolphins which rank as one of the smartest creatures God has made.

A)No in His Word - God compares us the most to sheep.

B)Sheep are one of the dumbest, the neediest of God's creation

C)Sheep left to themselves – they will wander into harms way.

1)They will wander from safety and provision.

D)A herd of sheep have been known to follow ONE wayward sheep right off a cliff to their doom.

1)Sheep are helpless – they can't find food on their own,

Sheep do not naturally rest – they need help to lie down

A)When a sheep falls down it needs help getting back up

B)To put it simply - Sheep need a shepherd - and that is why God compares us to sheep

C)WE NEED A SHEPHERD TOO!

D)Good news – Jesus has chosen to be our shepherd,

1)The great God of the universe has stooped to take care of you and me.

It is that sentiment that David the Psalmist is celebrating here in Psalm 23

A)Consider a few things this Psalm tells us about Jesus as our Shepherd

B)#1 Jesus is our shepherd wants to lead us- He is in charge of the path and the pace.

C)The imagery - 2 **He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters.**

He leads us into seasons of rest, refreshment and refueling -

A)That is the picture of green pastures and still waters

B)Those seasons where everything is falling into place - going great - no drama - PEACE

1)Those seasons are amazing aren't they

C)Like being on vacation - Devotions are good - in tune with the Lord - marriage -

1)Worshipful all the time - singing - God you're so good to me.....

But the problem is those seasons in the green pastures and beside the still waters - don't last that long

A) Life interrupts them - stuff happens - we come back to reality.

B) Bills, sickness, crisis - { that is life - being Human

C) One of the things that I think is essential for all Christians to understand is this:

1) The Christian life is a blessed life - but it is not an easy life.

It rains on the just and the unjust alike - not sunny over all our houses

A) we face trials and difficulties just like everyone else

B) And constant battle from an enemy that is at war with our souls!

C) But we don't go through any of it alone - WE HAVE A GOOD SHEPHERD!

V.3 He restores our souls

A) To restore something means to bring it back to its right or original condition.

B) You restore a piece of furniture. You restore a classic car.

1) You restore an old house.

C) But how in the world do you restore sheep? What is their right position?

In Psalm 42 the Psalmist mentions three times in just eleven verses the psalmist describes his soul as being "cast down."

A) That speaks of being discouraged or despondent.

B) Although being cast down certainly includes the ideas of being discouraged or despondent,

1) the meaning goes much deeper and can be easily missed by those with little to no knowledge of sheep.

C) One of the things that Keller points out in his book - A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23 - Sheep can become Cast or Cast down.

He writes a Cast sheep is a very pathetic sight -

A) The way sheep become "cast" happens like this: As the sheep lies down, it may roll to one side to relax.

B) But, sheep have really flat backs when the center of gravity in the body shifts - end up on their backs.

1) Feet up in the air

C) Some of you are thinking - Wait my Dog or cat does that all the time - TRUE

1) For a dog or cat it means - they are the most content

Secure - happy as can be

D) But it is the opposite for a sheep - super scary

1) The sheep becomes helpless because It cannot bring itself back to its feet.

Gases begin to build up in its stomach which retard the blood circulation.

A) After a few hours on their back their stomach hardens - air passage is cut off - suffocate

B) This is referred to as a "cast down" position.- Super Dangerous

C) Also makes them extremely vulnerable to predators who want to eat them

1) But the Good shepherd Restores them

How does a Shepherd Restore the Sheep when he find it in that position?

A) He starts by gently massaging their legs to restore blood circulation

B) Then the Shepherd will straddle the sheep and lift it back into standing position - back on it's feet

1) Holding onto the sheep until the sheep is able to regather it's equilibrium

C) Then and only then will the sheep be restored back to the flock

Life has a way of knocking us down.

A) It is easy for us to lose our sense of balance and equilibrium - end up on our backs -

B) We can feel like we are about to suffocate from pressure

C)The Walls can feel like they are caving in around us - claustrophobic - on edge in our hearts

D)We can fake it on the outside - but inside our soul is Cast down -

1)Despondency and depression are looming in our heart

Jesus our good Shepherd is right there seeking to gently restore us - back to health and life.

A)He whispers in our ears - I am here- I have got you

⁶Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; ⁷and the peace of God, which **surpasses all understanding**, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:6-7

B)So our shepherd leads us into green pastures, beside the still waters -

C)He is the great restorer of our souls

D)Notice what David says next -V.3b Jesus leads us into the Paths of Righteousness - two ideas here.

Paths of righteousness - the godly path -

A)Jesus is directs us on how to live the godly life

B)Peter put it this way: His divine power has given to us all things that *pertain* to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue.

2 Peter 1:3

C)He is empowering us and leading us into life and godliness - the more we follow him

But the paths of righteousness can also be translated - RIGHT PATHS.

A)Jesus our Shepherd will lead us down a path that we need to go/path that takes us in the right direction

B)It is the right path - but it is not always easy path - might be up hill - bumpy - rocks to walk over

C)Right paths can be hard? The path of confrontation -

1)The path of surrender - face to face with our pride

D)Right Paths are not always easy paths -

Our natural tendency is to choose the path of least resistance

A)But often times the path that includes resistance is exactly the path we need to be on.

B)That right path is going to build your faith - build your endurance

1)Make you more like Jesus

C)NOTE: He leads me in the paths of righteousness **For His name's sake.**

Your life & my life is a platform a stage that God wants to be glorified on

A)We exist to bring him glory - Shine as lights - see our lives - glorify him

B)Sometimes the path and the pace are a part of God's preparation -

1)Preparing us for something future.

C)David - anointed at 15 but he would not become king until he was around 30

D)Most of those 15 years in between he spent on the run - living in caves - band of ruffians

E)David would not have picked that path - but it was the RIGHT PATH for his preparation

F)David's Shepherd was in charge of the path and the pace - hard times

1)But it was God's training ground to prepare him to be King.

So if you don't like where you are at today - you have a problem with God's leadership.

A)You have a problem with his Path and the Pace

B)Well Pastor Rob - I read the Psalms and David did a lot of complaining too about his situation.

C)This is true - David was brutally honest with God - he would say things like - God kill my enemies!!!

1)Just take out those who are causing me so much harm.

D)Being honest - I love that - I wish I had the freedom to pray that way!!!

And David was called a man after God's own heart!

A)Here is why - Yes it is true that David prayed some really honest prayers

B)Yes it is true - David complained about his situation - God this stinks

C)But here are 2 things that make David different from us -

1st David never complained to others about his situation

A)Yes he complained to God - but not others

B)All that time that Saul was chasing him around the country trying to kill - him

1)David didn't speak ill of Saul

C)And when he had opportunity to Kill - Saul -

1)Saul comes into the cave where David and his men are hiding out - His men say now is your chance

D)God has delivered your enemy into your hand - David says no way -

1)NO!!! Not going to touch the Lord's anointed

E)The Lord is my Shepherd - he will take care of my enemies in his time

So David never complained to others about his situation He only complained to God

A)And when he complained to God - he didn't stay there in that complaining state.

B)You read these Psalms where David starts off complaining = grouchy - depressed

1)But They never end that way. -

C)David would start off complaining mad - angry depressed

But then he would start to focus his attention on His good Shepherd - His faithful God

A)His perspective would change - he would factor God into the equation

B)See it differently - He is the lifter of my head - he is in control - he is faithful - Ends rejoicing in God

My theory: Wrote those songs in more than one sitting - Verse 1 in the morning

A)Then he would go off on his day - time to think and pray - contemplate - faithfulness of God

B)Write v2-3 that evening or the next day.

C)He always ends up getting his eyes on the Lord - sees the situation differently -

Our problem we only complain - we never stop complaining!

A)We don't just complain to God we complain to anyone and everyone who will listen to us

B)Many of those people only reinforce our frustration - More angry - more depressed

1)More confused.

C)The problem for some of us - We only lift our heads high enough to see the problems

1)We get overwhelmed by the Problems - we think we have to fix the problem

D)If the problem can't get fixed - we are despondent

David lifted his head - HIGHER - saw God his shepherd who was God is bigger than his problems

A)Horizontal Vs Vertical

B)We have to get Vertical friends

He leads us into green pastures, he leads us beside the still waters - refreshing times

A)He also leads us into the Path of righteousness -

B)Right paths that are going to produce righteousness in us

1)Paths that are meant to make us more like Jesus

Notice what he says next - V.4 Yea, 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.

Now verse 4 is interesting and at first glance it might seem odd

A)The same shepherd who leads us into green pastures – beside the still waters – **Who leads us into rest – and restoration and righteousness**

B)Also leads us into the Valley of the Shadow of death!

C)that might seem odd – that might seem like a bad thing to us. – Sounds Scary–

1)why is he leading us there? Keller insights pic

It was quite common for shepherds to have the sheep grazing in the lowland areas in the winter and spring months –

A)But when summer hit they would take the sheep to higher ground where it was cooler

B)In order to get to the higher elevation the Shepherd would have to lead the sheep through the Valley.

C)The Problem was the Valleys were Dangerous – Wild animals –

1)dark passages/ Sudden storms – bring floods

D)But to get to the MT top they had to pass through the Valley –

1)The VALLEY COULD NOT BE AVOIDED

The Same thing is true in the Christian life.

A)In order to get to the MT top – sometimes are Shepherd Jesus has to lead us through the Valley.

B)He doesn't cut past the Valley times

C)The Valley's are not meant to break us but to build us up

Now there is something mentioned in this Psalm about the Valley's that is so beautiful, but easy to miss! **Yea** 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.

A)Notice at this point the personal pronoun changes from he to you!

B)Reason: **The Lord is more personal in the Valleys!**

C)In our darkest hours is when the Lord shows up the most

1)It is in the difficult times that we see him in new ways

D)Disciples were in a storm - Jesus is sleeping -

1)He is at rest in your storm too - not freaking out

They wake him up - Speaks to the wind and the waves - Who is this.....obey him.

A)Discovered him in a new way

B)Sends them into a storm - Waves crashing over the boat - die! He comes walking on the water

C)The storm that was over their heads was his sidewalk!

D)My point: Jesus gets even more personal in the storms - He is near - not abandoned

I love the confidence that David expresses here: Even though I walk through the Valley of the ...death –

A) **I WILL NOT FEAR – WHY ?**

For **You are with me; Your rod and Your staff**, they comfort me.

B)In the dark valley, He is not **before us** but **beside us**, leading the way and calming our fears.

C)Jesus expressed his care for the sheep – in John 10

¹¹ “I am the good shepherd. **The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep (ALL IN.)** ¹² But a hireling, *he who is not the shepherd, one who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf catches the sheep and scatters them.* ¹³ The hireling flees because he is a hireling and does not care about the sheep. ¹⁴ I am the good shepherd; and I know *My sheep*, and am known by My own. John 10:11-14

When the difficulties arise in your life – KNOW THIS – Jesus is right beside you – not a hireling

A)The Devil wants you to think you have been abandoned – but nothing could be further from the truth.

B)The Lord is right beside you to lead you through the difficult time.

His Rod and His Staff they comfort me!

A)The Rod was a club like stick that the shepherd would use to hit predators and enemies –

B)The Shepherds staff was a long curved stick

1)He would use to gather the sheep close and the pull them out of harm's way.

C)**Application for us – no matter where Jesus our shepherd is leading us –**

1)we can know that we will not lack Safety

D)Because he is with us – and he has the strength – to keep us from falling

1)and all the necessary tools to take care of us.

In the Valley seasons - Verses and promises like these become more REAL

A)**Here is a promise - Isaiah 26:3** You will keep *him* in perfect peace, *whose mind is stayed on You*, because he trusts in You.

B)Peace – the absence of fear –

²⁷ Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; **not as the world** gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. – John 14:27

Notice that the Psalm continues on this personal emphasis

⁵You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;

Note David is not switching the metaphor here. –

A)Don't get thrown by the word table here

B)See before the Shepherd would lead the Sheep up to the MT top –

1)he would go before them –and prepare a place to graze

C)He would find the right place to graze –

1)he would go through it and make sure there were no poisonous plants

D)That grazing place would be referred to us –
THE TABLE

E)Sometimes the Shepherd would even create an enclosure in that table space with rocks - trees

1)So the sheep could sleep in their at peace in the night - not worry about predators

All of that preparation was done in the presence of the Sheep's enemies

A)The Wolves and other animals that would want to harm the sheep would watch him working –

B)It was a sign to those animals that the shepherd was claiming that territory and they had better beware

1)Trespassers would be dealt with severely

C)When the sheep arrived at the end of their climb up the MT - to this table Mesa that was prepared

1)They knew they were not going to lack in provision

D)Their Shepherd took care of everything they needed to live on the MT for the summer months

1)So too with us - He supplies us with everything we need in that season!

So the Shepherd not only would lead the Sheep into Safety –

A)He would also lead them into Joy

You anoint my head with oil; My cup runs over.

B)The enemy is watching looking for where he can pull me down – but my shepherd is supplying me

C)He anoints my head with oil –

1)Speaks of a daily fresh anointing that is available to us from the Holy Spirit to fulfill our calling

Jesus said – Not leave you orphans – but I am going to give you the HS – Help you, guide you, empower you to live for me.

A)With the Help of the Holy Spirit – my cup doesn't run dry but it runs over.

B)I am never going to be lacking as long as I am following my shepherd - my cup runs over!!!

1)IN the darkest moments – He supplies me with what I need to not just survive the moment –

2)but to Thrive in the moment

The World looks on at us – pays the most attention in the difficult moments –

A) Seen many times where unbelievers watch in amazement –believing going thru a tragedy

B) and ask – how are they handling this so well.

1) It is not them – it is their Shepherd who is upholding them – strengthening them

C) The time of difficulty that you would think would destroy them

1) is actually building them up – they experience his provision and grace

D) I am watching many in our church family go through this right now.

So our Shepherd is leading us through difficult times, he's leading us into joy. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me -All the days of my life;

A) You talk to most people and the idea of God following them - -

Aa) Thinking Wrath/ Judgment – he is out to get me

B) Yet David is saying, “Hey, those footprints you hear behind you? That's goodness and mercy.”

C) There is something chasing you.

D) There is something in pursuit of you Christian, but it's not wrath;

1) it's goodness. It's mercy.

I'll say this as plainly as I know how.

A) To surrender to the leadership of Jesus is to surrender to goodness and mercy.

B) To rebel against the leadership of Jesus is to rebel against goodness and mercy.

Finally – because the Lord is my Shepherd I shall not lack Hope – He is leading me into confidence And I will dwell in the house of the LORD. Forever.

A) When this life is over - I know where I am headed

B) His house - his presence.

C) John 14 - Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. ² In My Father's

house are many mansions; if *it were* not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, *there* you may be also.

I am looking forward to Heaven –

A) Looking forward to when Jesus returns I will be with him

B) Heaven is not the end of the story for us!

C) Jesus RETURNS - He sets up his kingdom here on earth

1) Makes right the mess that man has made of his world

D) We come back with him - we have a part to play in is Kingdom - BIG PICTURE

E) NEW HEAVEN - NEW EARTH

F) EYE ON THE PRIZE !!!