

Sunday Night Message

February 3, 2013

Psalm 23 – A Psalm of the Good Shepherd; A Psalm for the Sheep

Series – The Psalms

Text – Psalm 23

Introduction (v.1)

This is a Psalm of David, but when did David write it. Most believe that an old King, who remembered the sweet days of being a young shepherd boy, wrote it. This Psalm was intensely personal to David, but it applies to all of those who are born into the family of God. The Lord is my shepherd, too. Is the Lord your shepherd.

Notice the position of this Psalm: it comes after the Psalm of the Cross (Psalm 22 – Read Psalm 22:1; 6 - 18). There can be no green pasture, no still water, no restoration of the soul, and no path of righteousness, unless the Good Shepherd Himself is willing to become the lamb (the sheep) of God, which taketh away the sins of the world.

Notice that God compares Himself to a Shepherd. Perhaps no greater illustration could be made. It demonstrates the love, care, and protection of God for his children; and it also demonstrates the utter helplessness of the child of God. The sheep simply cannot survive without a Shepherd.

Read John 10:1 – 30

J. Vernon McGee says that there is a shepherd trilogy contained in Psalm 22, 23, and 24. They belong together.

In Psalm 22, we see Christ as the good shepherd that lays down his life for the sheep; in Psalm 23, He is the Great Shepherd:

"Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen." - Hebrews 13:20-21

Then Psalm 24 presents Him as the Chief Shepherd:

"And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away." - 1 Peter 5:4

Psalm 22 – Saviour

Psalm 23 – Satisfier

Psalm 24 – Sovereign

Psalm 22 – Cross

Psalm 23 – Shepherds Crook

Psalm 24 – Crown

Psalm 22 – Foundation

Psalm 23 – Manifestation

Psalm 24 – Expectation

Psalm 22 – Died

Psalm 23 – Living

Psalm 24 – Coming

Psalm 22 – Past

Psalm 23 – Present

Psalm 24 – Future

Psalm 22 – He gives His life for the Sheep

Psalm 23 – He gives His love to the sheep

Psalm 24 – He gives His light regarding when He shall appear

Notice also that, in Scripture, only a redeemed people can be referred to as sheep. Lost people are referred to as wolves or goats.

Consider the sheep: (from Chuck Swindoll's commentary on the Psalms)

- 1 Sheep lack a sense of direction
- 2 Sheep are virtually defenseless
- 3 Sheep are easily frightened
- 4 Sheep are, by nature, unclean
- 5 Sheep cannot find food and water
- 6 The sheep's wool does not belong to the sheep

"Know ye that the LORD he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture." - Psalm 100:3

Notice that the sheep "shall not want". You may ask, "want for what?" The answer is want for anything. The Good Shepherd supplies everything that is needed for the sheep.

"The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger: but they that seek the LORD shall not want any good thing." - Psalm 34:10

"Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account. But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God." - Philippians 4:17-18

This is by far the most familiar passage of Scripture in the entire Bible.

It is very short, yet its truth is very large and powerful. This like the Gettysburg Address: it doesn't take long to say it, but it says a lot.

This Psalm gives comfort and security to the frightened sheep.

When you can't sleep because of some problem you are facing in life – don't count sheep - go to the Shepherd.

Lose your job?; facing a physical problem?; have people mistreated you?; a financial setback?; have you lost a loved one? You have a Shepherd, a Great Shepherd who will take care of you.

I The Good Shepherd Supplies Sustenance to the Sheep (v. 2)

Green pastures and still waters speak of God's provision.

Symbolically, we can equate the green pastures to the Word of God. We can come to the rich, nutrient saturated truth of the Bible, and lie in it; soaking it in.

II The Good Shepherd Propitiates Salvation for the Sheep (v. 3)

"I lay down my life for the sheep" (John 10:15)

God's grace and mercy restores the soul that comes to Him for salvation; but it also restores the sheep that has strayed or fallen.

III The Good Shepherd Provides Security to the Sheep (vs. 4 - 6)

A Security through the Trials of Life

B Security through the Tears of Death

Notice - we only go through the valley of the shadow of death - the substance of death has been removed for the Christian. We only will pass by its shadow.

"So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord." - 1 Corinthians 15:54-58

"thou art with me" (v. 4)

"Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." - Hebrews 13:5

"thy rod and thy staff they comfort me"

The rod was for defense and correction.

The staff was for support and direction.

Notice that it is comforting to know that we have a shepherd that knows where He is going, and knows how to re-direct us when we stray off course.

"Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him." - Proverbs 22:15

"thou prepares a table"

"thou anointest my head with oil" – oil has always been symbolic of the Holy Spirit.

"my cup runneth over" – the fruit of the Spirit.

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law." - Galatians 5:22-23

"goodness and mercy" – God has only goodness and mercy for the sheep who stay close to Him. These glad promises are not for the straying sheep, for they may fall prey to the wolves, or they may wander away from their source of nourishment and supply.

Is the Lord your Shepherd? Are you sticking close to Him? If you are, then all of the promises of this Psalm are yours for the claiming.