

Psalm 23 - The Lord is my shepherd

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This morning I would like us to take a look at the Psalm 23. But, before we do I want us to close our eyes and listen to The Valley Song by Jars of Clay
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CvHMjLrSJ0&feature=related>

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I feel God's pleasure mercy and love over each one of us and sense that this morning he wants continue to reaffirm his kindness toward us.

Psalms 23:1-6

1 A Psalm of David. The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

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

3 He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

4 Even 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 overflows.

6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

Verse 1

The Lord is my shepherd I shall not want.

Not only is He OUR shepherd but He is personally MY shepherd and YOUR shepherd. He cares for the individual.

If we were living in the Middle East we could still see traditional shepherds that know each of their sheep by name and they can call individual sheep out from the flock.

These shepherds care about the individual just like Jesus does about each of us. Our hopes, desires, dreams, and wants.

David was a shepherd before he was called to lead the nation. He took over from Saul who was a donkey farmer and not a shepherd.

Donkey farmers drive donkeys from the rear, yelling out commands to the herd them in a certain direction. Shepherds lead from the front. They know the sheep and the sheep know him. They follow out of love and devotion, not fear and distrust.

Ray Stedman says this about how Middle Eastern shepherds knew their flocks.

In the East, shepherds brought their flocks into one central sheepfold every evening where half-a-dozen flocks gathered together and were guarded by a porter or gatekeeper behind locked doors. In the morning the shepherds returned and each called his own sheep. Although the flocks had been mingled together, each flock knew its own shepherd's voice, and each would follow its own shepherd and no other.

Verse 2

He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters

The Christian life has two aspects to it - one active and one contemplative. Feeding and resting. We need both to be balanced and healthy. Either, all activity or all rest will lead to an imbalance

Our shepherd takes us and leads us to places where there is food and rest. We do not need to worry - he will take care of our physical needs, if we let him.

We can refuse to feed on God's word and be the poorer for it and we can refuse to take rest in natural places that calm us and continue to feel under pressure in life.

When and where the Lord leads - let's follow.

Verse 3

He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

When we have been knocked about by the world, the flesh or the devil, our shepherd restores our soul, he repairs and mends the broken areas of our lives and brings refreshing.

Our lives are to be lifelong ones of following our shepherd where he will lead us in paths of righteousness or the right paths

These paths are for his name's sake in that they bring him the greatest glory and us the greatest joy.

Verse 4

Even 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.

He will lead us in the right paths and sometimes these will be through very dark times where we can see no light at the end of the tunnel, but he will never leave us or forsake us.

His rod and staff bring comfort.

He uses the rod to ward off the attacks of the enemy and the staff to keep us from straying away from him.

Verse 5

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows

The good shepherd will not allow us to be destroyed by the enemy

John 10:27-30

27 My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.

28 I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.

29 My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand.

30 I and the Father are one."

In fact we will eat in peace and safety in front of our enemy.

The shepherd will also anoint our heads with oil which speaks of God separating or consecrating us for himself. It also represents gladness.

The cup that overflows represents abundance. He is not stingy with us but wants to pour out more of his favour, more of his grace, more of his love, more of his anointing.

As someone has said it is a sure sign of God's grace in our lives to always be wanting more.

Verse 6

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever

As we go about our daily lives we will leave a trail of goodness and mercy that will follow us all the days of our lives.

And psalm 23 finishes with the wonderful promise of assurance that we will dwell or live in God's house forever. What an amazing promise.

The thing that strikes me most about this psalm is that it is all of God - we are called to be his sheep - simple, humble recipients.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever