This morning, we pick back up in Psalm 23, but first, let’s recap just a bit from verses 1-3, “The Lord is *my* shepherd.” Every promise in the psalm hangs on the power of this truth. It is the foundational verse. It is relational, and it is personal. Remember, Christian, our shepherd is reliable, relational, responsible, and responsive to the sheep. Notice something of great importance in verse 4: David goes from speaking *about* God (in the 3rd person) to speaking *to* God (in the 2nd person). This psalm changes radically. The discussion is now one of intimacy and deep affection. David says in essence, “I know I’m going to walk through it, But I am at peace because YOU are with me.” God has all the tools needed to guide David—and us--through the valley. David doesn’t have to fear because he is not alone Repeatedly in scripture, we read that the Lord is with David. In 2 Samuel 7, the Lord makes a covenant with His servant David regarding the throne. As for us, our Shepherd has may a covenant with us according to His throne, His position, His sovereignty. We enter into this covenant with confidence because Yahweh is a 24/7 God. Family, listen. Behind every shadow—shadow of death, even—is light. The Shepherd in the psalms is the Savior in the Gospel. There will be valleys, there will be shadows, but turn your focus from the shadow and place it on the light. Our Shepherd is the light of the world (\*Hebrews 13:5-6; \*\*James 1:17)!

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\*Hebrews 13:5-6

5 Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said,

“Never will I leave you;

never will I forsake you.”

6 So we say with confidence,

“The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid.

What can mere mortals do to me?”

\*\*James 1:17

Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.

As the culture darkens, we Christians should shine brighter. His rod and staff protect us, guide us, discipline us. He guides us through valleys and over mountains. Peace, Family, is not the absence of problems. No, Peace is the presence of Jesus. In Old Testament prophecy and by the announcement of angels in the New Testament, our Savior has a name: Emmanuel, literally “God with us.” And verse 5 of the 23rd Psalm assures us that God is generous. This table that He has prepared for us is a generous table of fellowship. But sometimes, we get so busy looking around that we neglect to sit down in answer to His invitation. We neglect to nourish ourselves in fellowship with Him. Our attention to other things breathes life into them, when Our Shepherd—with His abilities and strengths, wants to breathe new life into us (\*Psalm 103:1-5). This table is one of long term satisfaction, devotion, and affection. It is a feast of good things. Jesus, our Shepherd, gives us what we need because He is what we need. We need His table of fellowship. In the Middle East, it is customary for the host to offer a full cup of water or wine. The host continues to refill the cup until the guest stops drinking. It the hosts wants the guest to stay for a long time, he fills that cup to overflowing. In His first miracle, you will remember, Jesus turns water to wine at the wedding in Cana. In fact, He makes what we count as 120 gallons of wine—enough for ten weddings! Our Shepherd wants us to find satisfaction in Him. Some of us haven’t taken time to look at our cup, much less stopped to take a sip. Yet, David tells us to “taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the one who takes refuge in him” (Psalm 34:8). Our cup overflows with abundance because that’s the nature of our God—the Living Water. And yet we don’t “taste and see” and ten complain that we are thirsty!

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\*Psalm 103:1-5

1 Praise the Lord, my soul;

all my inmost being, praise his holy name.

2 Praise the Lord, my soul,

and forget not all his benefits—

3 who forgives all your sins

and heals all your diseases,

4 who redeems your life from the pit

and crowns you with love and compassion,

5 who satisfies your desires with good things

so that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s.

One of the things we know about the hills of Palestine in the time of David was that the biggest threat to a sheep was a nose fly. The fly would lay eggs in the nose of a sheep, then hatch later in its nasal cavities. The wriggling hatched larvae would drive the sheep crazy. The poor sheep would run and bleat and bang its head against rocks and hard soil. It would stop eating, lose weight, and stop growing. But the caring Shepherd would apply a mixture of olive oil and sulfur, sheep by sheep, to protect and bring relief to each and every one of his flock. David writes in verse 5 of Psalm 23, “You have anointed my head with oil.” The oil of anointing, the protection of the Shepherd, the intimacy of the anointing of the Holy Spirit are all ours in abundance. As great and powerful as God is, He never overlooks even one of us. The Shepherd in the psalm is the Savior of the Gospels. It is time for the sheep to return to the Shepherd: “Goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life,” David writes in verse 6. Harry Ironside says, “Goodness and mercy are the sheepdogs that keep the sheep where they belong.” They are, too, covenant love and redemptive power. In the final words of Psalm 23, David speaks to deep confidence in God’s loyalty. John Philips has said, “Goodness takes care of my steps. Mercy takes care of my stumbles.” And this protection lasts forever. Family, in the old covenant, sheep died for the shepherd. In the New Covenant, the good Shepherd—with nail-scarred hands—dies for the sheep. And in receiving the free gift of salvation, pardoned for our sin, we shall “dwell in the house of the Lord forever.”

Passages in support of this sermon:

1 Peter 2:24-25

“He himself bore our sins” in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; “by his wounds you have been healed.” 25 For “you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

Psalm 23

A psalm of David.

1 The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing.

2 He makes me lie down in green pastures,

he leads me beside quiet waters,

3 he refreshes my soul.

He guides me along the right paths

for his name’s sake.

4 Even though I walk

through the darkest valley,[a]

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 your goodness and love will follow me

all the days of my life,

and I will dwell in the house of the Lord

forever.