

Study of Psalm 23 – Part 2 - May 26, 2021

Psalm 23. Written by David, a shepherd. Draw us to The Good Shepherd.

23:1 - The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

2 - He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.

3 - He restoreth my soul: he leadeth 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 thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

5 - Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth 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.

Vs. 2 – 4 Requirements for sheep to Lie Down

Unless these 4 are met, strange thing about sheep - they won't lie down.

These factors help us understand the vital role of the Owner:

- makes it possible for sheep to lie down, rest & relax. Content. Thrive. Flock that is restless, discontented, agitated never does well. People too.

- **Free of all Fear** – **Ex.:** one Pekinese caused 200 sheep to flee in terror.
 - 1 jackrabbit will startle 1 sheep, cause a stampede; others run in blind fear
 - If suspicious/anxious, sheep stand ready to flee. Have no self-defense.
 - Shepherd must stand ready to defend the sheep
 - 2 dogs killed 292 sheep. Cougar killed 9. Common – sheep rustling.
 - Phillip Keller slept “keeping watch over the flock by night” ready to defend them. He slept w/a rifle & flashlight.
 - **Nothing more reassuring that his presence in the field.**
 - No substitute for knowing the Good Shepherd is nearby. God's presence can dispel fear, calm panic, worry over the unknown.
 - Life is uncertain. He gives us hope. It will turn out ok/for good.
 - **2 Tim. 1:7** – “For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power, love, and self-control.”
 - **Psalm 4:8** – “In peace I will lie down and sleep, for you alone, O Lord, will keep me safe.”
 - “Now I lay me down to sleep” – in peace.

- **Free from Friction with other sheep**

- Chickens: “pecking order” Cattle: horning order; Sheep: “butting order”
- Domineering old ewe will boss others sheep. Maintains her position of privilege by butting/driving others away from best grazing/bed ground
- Ezekiel 34:20-22 - “Therefore this is what the Sovereign LORD says ...: See, I myself will judge between the fat sheep and the lean sheep. ²¹ Because you shove with flank and shoulder, butting all the weak sheep with your horns until you have driven them away, ²² I will save my flock, and they will no longer be plundered. I will judge between one sheep and another.”
- B/c of rivalry, tension & competition, there is friction in a flock.
- Sheep feel the need to stand up, defend their rights. **Ex:** Ewe display.
 - Phillip in view, the sheep stopped their rivalries/fighting
 - **Shepherd’s presence made all the difference in their behavior.**
- People are same. Butting & competing to “get ahead.”
 - Jealousy; hurt; rivalry.... Stand up for themselves.
- God knows how to lift you up.
 - **1 Pet. 5:6** – “Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.”
 - **Matt. 23:12** – “But those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”
 - Paul - “I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances.” – **Phil. 4:11**
 - Unrest reveals a heart that is not content in God’s care.
 - Less aggressive sheep were far more contented, quiet, restful.
- Consider the Shepherd – affection to the weaker lamb.
- Consider too the Shepherd’s desire for a contented flock. It doesn’t please God for us trying to be the Top Dog. “Those who are first...”
 - Our aim: humble hearts, walking contentedly w/ Shepherd close by
 - When my eyes are on Shepherd, they aren’t on those around me.
 - God ultimately is judge of my status in life. Christ is my standard.

- **Free of pests so they can relax**

- Sheep, esp. in the summer, are bothered by nasal flies, bot flies, warble flies, and ticks. When tormented, they can’t lie down & rest.
- Only a diligent shepherd’s care will prevent them from annoying sheep
 - Apply various insect repellants to the sheep. Dipped for ticks.
 - Shelter under trees & bush to find refuge from their tormentors.

- All involves considerable extra care.
 - Shepherd's goal: keep the flock quiet, contented, & at peace.
- In our lives, have annoyances, irritations, petty frustrations. "bugged"
- The **Holy Spirit** is like **healing oil** in our lives.
 - When we give God our problems, He gives His assistance.
 - He provides us with peace; a calmness that He will deal it. Content.
- **Free from Hunger**
 - Most sheep countries are dry, semi-arid areas. Palestine, where David wrote Psalm 23 is a dry, brown, sunburned land; rocky.
 - **Green pastures don't just happen by chance in most places.**
 - They're the result of tremendous time, labor, & skill in land use
 - Hungry sheep aren't contented; don't thrive. They're of no use...
 - Hungry sheep are always on their feet, on the moving, grazing...
 - God's goal was for Israel - "**promised land**" – flowing w/milk & honey
 - God foresaw abundant life; joy & victory. Needs met. Content.
 - As our Shepherd, God wants to clear the rocks - doubt, stone hearts – hard, uncaring; roots – bitterness; pride, selfish, arrogant.
 - He sows in us seeds of grace, mercy, love, patience...
 - He waters us with the oil of the Holy Spirit.
 - He tends & cares for us, cultivates in us a rich, fertile, productive heart
 - Shepherd's desire is to see us at our best.
 - God wants us happy, contented, trusting in His management.
 - The Shepherd finds joy in seeing contented sheep

Song of the week:

"Psalm 23 – Surely Goodness, Surely Mercy" by Shane & Shane

Re-open for in-person worship – 7-7-2021