

Study of Psalm 23 – Part 4 - June 9, 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.

Sheep are creatures of habit... destruction. Can't just get along anywhere.

- If left to their own whims, they will cause their own destruction.
- Overgraze . . . erosion. Well worn areas . . . Infested w/parasites.

For sheep to flourish, they need to constantly be under care & guidance.

- **Must be led** – for sake of land, sheep, & owner's reputation.
- Keeping sheep on the move... pasture-pasture... **pre-determined plan.**
- An owner's reputation ... how efficiently sheep move to new forage.
- This demands great attention; Balance: grazing & growth.
 - Owner knows his land & where flock will thrive.
 - Sheep are excited when gate is opened to new pasture.

People are same. We cling to habits that ruin our lives.

- **Is. 53:6** – “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way.”
- We have pride; we know best. Refuse to “be told what to do.”
- **Prov. 14:12** – “There is a way that appears to be right, but in the end it leads to death.”
- Problem is - we don't want to be led. Pride wants us to lead, not follow; my wishes, my ideas, my way. Self-will; self-sufficient, stubborn.

- **The answer** – Jesus. **John 10:9-11** – “I am the gate. Those who come in through me will be saved. They will come and go freely and will find good pastures. The thief’s purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. *My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life.* I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd sacrifices his life for the sheep.”
 - - - “*have life and have it abundantly*” – KJV
 - o Good, fresh pasture: feeds sheep, sheep thrive.
 - o **Back to this: Shepherd leads & sheep follow.**

We sing about **being led** of the Lord. We pray for it. But most don’t follow. **Pivotal point.** Many believers, few followers.

- Jesus was clear: this is **new attitude, new way of living, new principles;**
 - o Servant, not served; last, not first; humble, not proud.
- “If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake, you will save it.” – **Matt. 16:25**
 - o **To be led in paths of righteousness, we must become righteous.**
 - o God provides the way: **Is. 61:10** - “for He has clothed me with garments of salvation and wrapped me in a robe of righteousness”

To be led in paths of righteousness is like moving up to new, higher ground.
New beginning; new, abundant life. Exciting, challenging, rewarding.

7 New Attitudes – New Ways of Living:

1 – instead of loving myself most, love like Jesus: God first & others more.

Loving as the Good Shepherd does is a **deliberate act of will.**

– laying His life down for the sheep calls me to **lay down:**

Lay down my will, my pride, & **put myself out** for another

– Deliberately do something for others that costs me something, that is self-less love. That is what the Good Shepherd gives to us.

2 – instead of being part of the crowd, be set apart & singled out.

Most people want to belong, be part of the gang. We only want to be different when it appeals to our ego. **Dare to be different!**

- Most walk by, few stop. Most get even, **meek hearts** turn other cheek.

- **Meek:** mild of temper; soft; gentle; not easily provoked or irritated; humble. yielding; given to forbearance under injuries.
- “Moses was very meek, above all men”- **Num.12:3**. Still be leader!
- The Beatitudes remind us – God’s values are different. Be different.

3 – instead of insisting on my rights, be willing to give them up

- **Matt. 16:24** - Jesus told His disciples, “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.”
- “denying ourselves” means we pocket our pride; we play 2d fiddle w/o feeling abused; walk a 2d mile w/o complaining.
 - It’s hard to offend a person who is willing to be a servant.
 - This is about letting God show thru us; it’s not about us.
 - God has **pre-determined plan** for you. Ways for u to bless others.

4 – instead of being boss, be willing to be follow.

- in sheep terms, don’t be “**Top Ram**,” be a “**tail-ender**”
- desire to please Self is replaced by desire to please God.
- hallmark of “serene soul” & contentment is the **absence of “drive.”**
- **Contented people** put their life in the Master’s hands for His use, direction, & management. These people find time to help others.

5 – instead of finding fault & asking why, be willing to accept life.

- We feel entitled to answers. We look to pin blame. Criticize.
- Quick to focus on problems, forget the blessings.
 - **Reminder:** Shepherd does all for the welfare of the sheep. God is working in us, in everything, for our best. His grace is sufficient.
 - May have to be crippled to learn how to walk w/ God.
 - Illnesses bring us to our knees; . . . **depend** on God now.
 - “It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell.” – **Matt. 5:29**
- Acceptance only happens when u know that your life is in God’s hands.
- This is when many people **stop at the gate**; Believers, not followers.

6 – instead of pleasing others, I choose to please God

- Sheep follow the crowd; so do People; people will lead you astray.
 - o God works thru people, so does the Enemy.
- **John 12:43** shows **why some aren't followers**: "For they loved human praise more than the praise of God." . . . but they Believed.
- **Gal. 1:10** – "Am I now trying to win the approval of human beings, or of God? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ."
 - God will always lead you where it's best.

7 – instead of choosing my will, I am willing to follow His will

All 6 steps above involve the will. 9/10's of Christianity – of becoming a true follower of Jesus – involves the will.

- Followers say – I am willing to do whatever you ask me to do; go ...
- Followers re-act in a manner that honors God; His reputation on line.
- Most of us have **knowledge** of what God expects; **few have the will**, determination to act on it.
- The one who decides to truly follow God moves into new ground.

● Closing Thoughts

Knowing the Shepherd isn't the same as following Him.

But ... if you truly know the Shepherd – all He does for us b/c of His love - & that the Shepherd's desire is for the flock to be at its best – you can follow.

He will lead; He wants us to move on w/Him... for our benefit & for others.

- It's not an impossible task to live in righteousness; He makes a way - **Phil. 2:13** – "For it is God who works in you **to will and to act** on behalf of His good purpose."

SONG of the WEEK _ "Savior Like a Shepherd Lead Us" by THIS HOPE

Re-Open for Worship – 7-7-2021. Stay positive. Test negative. Vaccinate!