

The Lord is My Shepherd - Psalm 23 **Notes, Family Worship, Bible Reading**

Notes from the Sermon

We are closing the *Our Favorite Things* sermon with Bob Lancaster's favorite passage, which is one of the most well known and beloved texts in all of Scripture. The 23rd Psalm has rightfully been called "the Shepherd's Psalm" as it was a song penned by David who himself was a shepherd about the True Shepherd of his soul. For David, the metaphor is personal, rich, and deep. It points us to the tender care and love God has for His people.

Shepherding is fairly common in the story of the Bible, as some of the key characters were shepherds including Abraham and David. Furthermore, from the earliest times these men understood God as their Shepherd/King who ruled from a throne yet also cared deeply for His sheep (Genesis 48:15, Psalm 78:52, Ezekiel 34:11-12, 23). As God ruled His people in the Old Testament, He raised up kings who were to rule on His behalf. As King Saul in became the first king over these people God gave him the model of a shepherd/king, meaning he was to represent God's rule toward the people giving himself for the people, loving them as a shepherd cares for the sheep. The king was to be the servant of the people. Of course, Saul failed at this, as did all the kings in some way, most of them miserably. Rather than being shepherds, the kings generally became autocratic rulers who reversed the roles, forcing the people to serve the king and living only for his own greatness. Yet, as king, David never forgot his roots nor his role as king. And David never forgot the True Shepherd King, Yahweh God Himself. I can picture David here, looking over a field of sheep and remembering his days out in a similar field with his sheep as he writes this Psalm.

The Psalm has a fairly simple and beautiful structure, with a simple introduction and then three sections, pointing to three areas of loving care given by the Shepherd and three responses we have as a result of being His sheep. The introduction is the opening statement, "The LORD is my Shepherd." In the Hebrew the statement is even more succinct, simply stating "Yahweh Rophe", or God Shepherd. It is actually a name given to God flowing from His covenant relationship with Israel and stands along the other names tied to the great name Yahweh or Jehovah. These names are connected to the story of the Burning Bush in Exodus 3 and the call of Moses. In this story God gives Moses a new name by which He will be called by His people, "I AM." So in this case, the opening line could be read like this, "Jehovah God, the Great I AM who is the Shepherd." Sometimes, in our pursuit of religion and God we can get focused on doctrine and duty of the Christian life and forget that at the core our faith begins with God and is designed to be the experience of rich and beautiful relationship with Him. I AM the Shepherd, God is saying to us, a picture of intimacy, care, love, and protection. A shepherd's job is to lead, feed, protect, and care for his sheep. Over time a shepherd will get to know each of his sheep, giving them pet names and giving himself for them. Because of this, sheep trust the shepherd and know his voice, coming to him when he calls them. This is the picture painted for us here in this beautiful metaphor for our relationship with God.

The first stanza (v.1a-3) reminds us of the tender loving provision we have in God. This section points us to the daily care a shepherd gives to sheep, guiding them to food and water, moving them away from danger, and even rescuing them when they fall. The Good Shepherd is enough, His sheep trust and follow and as a result, they have nothing they want outside of what He provides. The second section (v.4-5) shows us the care and protection we have in God. Even in the deepest, darkest places where it seems death reigns, our Shepherd is with us and protecting. We never walk alone. And he stands between us and our greatest enemies, wolves that seek to devour, yet God is giving us the best in the face of persecution and suffering. As a result, the Psalmist says, "I will fear no evil." The third stanza is filled with promise. Our shepherd will never give up on us. In fact, Jesus gives us

a beautiful parable remind us that the Good Shepherd will leave the 99 sheep to go after and find the one lost sheep. I was the lost sheep, and Christ found me! And it is promise of worship in the presence of the LORD. The house of the LORD here is a reference to the Temple, the place of sacrifice and worship where God met His people. Yet the earthly Temple was nothing more than a shadow copy of the True Temple in heaven. Here the Psalmist reminds himself, "I will dwell" in this house forever.

We can't leave this Psalm without a reminder that in John 10 Jesus declares Himself to be the person identified in this Psalm as He says, "I am the Good Shepherd." Jesus is the True Shepherd King we need, the benevolent ruler who serves us, gives His life for us, and rescues us. He is the one who leads, feeds, cares, and protects His sheep. So may this Psalm give us hope this week, and may you be one of His sheep.

Bible Reading for the Week

Daily Bible Readings

| Sun | Mon | Tues | Weds | Thurs | Fri | Sat |
|---------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| Psalm 9 | Psalm 10 | Psalm 11 | Psalm 12 | Psalm 13 | Psalm 14 | Psalm 15 |

Reading from this past week: Psalm 23:1-6

Reading in preparation for this coming Sunday: Esther 9:20-10:3

Family Worship

Song - *King of Love*

<https://youtu.be/0f2dELJq5A>

Gospel Project

Story: John's vision of Jesus

Story Point: Jesus appeared to John in a vision.

Big Picture Question: What is the hope of the church?

Answer: The church looks forward to Jesus' return when He will make all things new.

Scripture: Revelation 1

New City Catechism

Question #32: What do justification and sanctification mean?

Answer: Justification means our declared righteousness before God. Sanctification means our gradual, growing righteousness.

Verse: 1 Peter 1:1-2

Scripture

Psalm 23

- What is a shepherd and what does he do? Knowing that, how is a shepherd a good metaphor for our relationship to Christ?
- Find a phrase in this Psalm that speaks to you and share why.
- Who is our Good Shepherd? How is Jesus the fulfillment of the promises from this Psalm?

Prayer

*Pray that we would find comfort and hope in knowing Christ as our True Shepherd.

*Pray for the work of the Missouri Baptist Convention as they plant churches, develop leaders, and share the Gospel in our state.