

SummerInThePsalms #9 – My Shepherd

Psalm 23

Intro:

There is probably no more familiar passage in the Old Testament, perhaps even the entire Bible, than our text today, Psalm 23. It, perhaps along with John 3:16, has **transcended traditional audiences and has touched hearts across every imaginable spectrum throughout the centuries.**

Some suggest Psalm 23 was the work of a young shepherd singing in the hills. But I, and many others, hear the voice of an older David—weathered by joy and sorrow—who now treasures his Shepherd more deeply than ever before.

- There is no anger or struggle. No war or strife. No guilt or fear.
- It is not that those things have ceased. As David will address, the enemies within his heart and all around are still real and lurk ever so close. Yet, He sings from the depths of his heart to the heights of heaven and the ends of the earth!

Through the Psalm, for a moment, **we are transported to a place in life beyond their touch. To a place possible for all, but only realized through “The LORD... my shepherd”.** My Savior, My Shepherd.

I. David’s Proclamation.

It is the premise of the entire Psalm. The Starting point.
This wonderful alternate reality begins with

A. Redemption.

The very first word of the Psalm is “LORD”. Jehovah.

Spurgeon wrote, *“There are no green pastures, no still waters on the other side of the twenty-second Psalm. It is only after we have read, “My God, my God, why has thou forsaken me!” that we come to “The LORD is my shepherd”. We must by experience know the value of the blood-shedding... before we shall be able to truly know the sweetness of the good Shepherd’s care.”*

As we have noted almost weekly, when you see “LORD”, it is **Jehovah**. The “I Am.” **The one graphically, prophetically revealed in Psalm 22 as the redeemer, the Savior.**

Jesus, in John 10, spoke of David’s metaphor of the Shepherd and the Sheep. If there had been any confusion or question, He cleared it:

“I am the door of the sheep...

*I am the door: **by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved and shall go in and out and find pasture...***

I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.”

He then directly went on to declare boldly and clearly that **many of the crowd that day were not His sheep because they chose not to believe in Him!**

Do you know Jesus as your Savior? If so, our Savior is our wonderful Shepherd.

If not, none of this is true for you. But it can be!

B. The Relationship: “is my shepherd”

1. Personal Possession: **“my”** - David knew his Savior, His Shepherd!

2. An absolute assurance: **“is”**.

- Not “*hope so*”. Even after all the ups and downs, it was not questioned.
 - **Sheep can’t negotiate a relationship, or earn their way into a fold.** David – “*I am His because He bought me! Not by merit. Not by might. But by His blood!*”

C. Realization. “my shepherd”

David begins this wonder by **seeing himself as a little sheep.**

- **Not “GGK”** – Great Giant Killer. A sheep
- **Not King.** A sheep.

David knew better than we do **the characteristics of sheep:**

- Dumb
- Dirty
- Defenseless

D. The Result. “I shall not want”; literally, **“be in want”**

Not – **“I won’t ever want anything”...**

But – “I’ll never need anything more than Him!”

The Premise of the glorious Psalm is the personal relationship with the personal Savior! Then...

II. David’s Pondering. Vs. 2-3

A. David’s testimony: “He...”

“maketh me to lie down in green pastures”

- The best of places
- The best of positions – stretched out without a care

“leadeth me beside the still waters”

- As opposed to rushing, dangerous waters
- Accessible, safe, and fulfilling

“restoreth my soul”

- He calms. Comforts. Cuddles and sometimes even carries...
- He makes everything “alright”. Makes life “special”.

“leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name’s sake”

As opposed **to Isaiah’s** vivid description:

“All we like sheep have gone astray. We have turned every one to his own way...” Isaiah 53:6

Or Solomon’s warning:

“There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.” Pro 16:25

He knows the way... He orders our steps... He leads us for our good and His glory!

B. David's unspoken shadows.

Later (vs. 5) David will mention his “enemies” – foes that could bind and enslave him.

A shadow is cast when a light falls on an object. As David shines the light of praise on God's truths, lurking in the shadows of those truths are dangerous realities. Enemies. Let's put it like this,

Behind each of the wonders of what the Great Shepherd does is the unspoken question, How will I respond? Think? Live?

Let's ask ourselves the questions in the shadows:

- **He maketh me to lie down, stretch out, in green pastures. *But do I?***
- **He leadeth me beside still waters.** Quiet waters of refreshment and contentment... ***But do I follow?***
- **He restores my soul. But do I let Him?** Does He... Heal? Whisper peace and comfort? Bring worth and significance?

As the Prodigal Father in Luke 15,

Do I (re)turn to Him, and ind

Does He meet me running with a kiss, forgiveness, a robe and ring, a happy celebration that I am home? Or, to stick with the Prodigal story, do we choose to waller in the pig pen of our choices? It doesn't depend upon Him, does it? His ability. His desire. He readiness! It depends upon... us.

- **He leadeth me in paths of righteousness for His name's sake? But do I wander?** Do I take detours of my own to less desirable ends?

David had done all... and now rejoices in the never-ending, never-failing love of God!

As we continue... **David is no longer just singing *about* His God, he is singing *to Him*. Pouring his soul out to Him directly.**

III. David's Prayer. Vs. 4-5.

A. David's acknowledgement:

1. In this life, there will be pain. Problems. Dark valleys. Even death.

To pretend otherwise is not wise.

It cheapens who God is and what He died to do in our lives!

Jesus didn't promise a struggle free life. He gave His life so that He could give us life and lead us through. "In the world you shall have tribulation. But be of good cheer – I have overcome the world"

2. David had enemies. Vs. 5

- **Lurking in the shadows without, watching**, seeking to devour him...
- **Lurking in the shadows of his own heart**, seeking to enslave and bind him

B. David's perspective: "*though I walk through...*"

In life's worst moments, we are only passing through!

We don't have to live there, and we shouldn't get stuck there!

C. David to His God:

1. "*I will fear no evil*"

"evil" - Evil is real, and it can be real bad!

"no evil" – whatever may come...

****Note: Fear controls us when we stay focused on our peril; Fear fades when we fix our eyes on our Shepherd.**

2. "*You...*"

"Are with me!" – Presence! Immanuel!

"thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me" – Protection –

- **From himself.**

Many times the shepherd, would have to use his staff and rod to pull his sheep back and sometimes correct them. David rejoiced that His God loved him so much that He would correct him and protect him from himself!

- **From outside enemies.** Wolves. Predators. People.

“thou preparest a table before in the presence of my enemies”

Literally: ***“God arranges things and provides for me in their face”***

God’s goodness is displayed conspicuously in the presence of the word darkness!

And now, one of the more uncomfortable—but unforgettable—truths about real shepherding...

“thou anointest my head with oil”

This is

- Not just the ceremonial and majestic use of oil as seen throughout the Old Testament
- Not just the practical use of oil – medicine and flavor

For sheep – it had a whole unique application:

Illustration: One of the greatest dangers – flies, worms, etc...

They would get in a sheep’s nose or ears and lay eggs...

worms would result... And not only infections but infestations. I know, that’s nasty!

Some of the things we deal with in life are nasty!

They work their way into our brains and drive us crazy!

But our Good Shepherd takes us, pulls us to Himself, and pours the balm of His Holy Spirit deep into our minds to quiet the crazies and heal and help...

“my cup runneth over”

- **Not just a plentiful supply in a world of drought**
- **But a pouring in to the point that the trash and junk which might have gathered on the top flow out and leave the best fresh, sustaining drink we could imagine. A drink we could never, as a sheep, make possible for ourselves!**

IV. David’s Prospects. Vs. 6

David ends with “LORD”.

A. David - *My Tomorrows*: "**all the days of my life**"

"goodness"

"mercy"

"all" – Not some!

"shall follow" –

Not PASSIVE!

Literally translated: "*They shall pursue me*".

The world chases us with fear and failure. But our Shepherd?

He pursues us with goodness. He tracks us down with mercy.

B. David: My "Forever" – ***I will dwell in the house of the Lord!***

"Dwell" – Live there!

"Forever" – Two words:

Long/forever + day = Forever day"

Why has this particular Psalm resonated so universally and so deeply?

Maybe it's because, in every soul, there is a longing for David's Savior,
David's Shepherd!

Why do we have it?

Not just to enjoy, but to experience!

If the LORD is your Shepherd—rest, rejoice, and follow. Whatever He asks,
wherever He leads, just trust and follow...

If the LORD is not your Savior, your Shepherd yet - you can trust Him and step
into His fold.

You *can* know Jesus today! Will you?