

44. Psalm 23:6b

“The Great Shepherd” Pt.12

(8-16-26)

Psalm 23:1–6 (NKJV)

¹ The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. ² He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters. ³ He restores my soul; He leads 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 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 runs 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.

This psalm opened with the proud, joyful declaration by David—**“The Lord is my Shepherd.”**

Now, it closes with an equally positive and confident statement—**“I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.”**

All throughout this psalm, David has been bragging about his Shepherd, expressing his contentment with his Shepherd's care and his absolute confidence in his Shepherd's ability to watch over

In other words, David is *satisfied*—and when you're satisfied you're content. (v.2)

This verse is David's statement of faith, his confident assurance that because he has made the Lord his Shepherd, he will dwell in His house forever!

We have to keep in mind that David is writing this psalm from the standpoint of a sheep, looking at, and recounting the activities that take place in the life of a sheep during the course of the year.

He has taken us from the green pastures and still waters of the lowlands which are found around the shepherd's village, up the mountain trials during late Spring, toward the higher elevations for the hot and dry summer months.

As we have talked about, when the shepherd gets to the top of the mountain mesa or *table* with its beautiful meadows—he prepares them '**a table**' in the presence of their enemies. (Comment)

However, the sheep have not feared because their shepherd's presence has been a continual source of comfort to them.

Then as Fall approaches with its storms and colder weather the shepherd leads the sheep down the mountain back to the shepherd's village for the long winter months.

It's a home coming for the shepherd and his sheep—a return to the fields, and communal sheepfold of the shepherd's village.

And marks the end of a long journey that has taken the sheep through dark valleys and dangerous pathways during the course of the year.

But now that they've come home it is here that David makes the statement "**I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.**"

In the Bible, a *house* can refer to a literal house where the shepherd lives—but it can also refer to a *family*—

¹ Now there was a long war between the house [family] of Saul and the house [family] of David. But David grew stronger and stronger, and the house of Saul grew weaker and weaker.

I believe this is the idea David has in mind at the end of Psalm 23—he is first expressing his satisfaction with being a member of the Lord’s house (family).

In David’s mind he has no desire to leave his Shepherd’s care—but also, it’s a statement of confidence that the Lord will never disown him or kick him out of His family either!

You see David believes that when he became a member of God’s family—he became one forever!

But in a practical sense, it’s as if David, in likening himself to a sheep, has finally come home again to his shepherd’s village and is now standing next to a sheep from another flock, bragging to it about the wonderful year it has had with its shepherd.

One author comments—

“When was the last time you were so overwhelmed by the way your shepherd cares for you and provides your needs that you couldn’t help telling someone what a wonderful Shepherd Jesus is to have? Aren’t you proud that the Lord is your Shepherd? And if so isn’t it natural to want to tell others about Him? In particular those who belong to another flock.”

Phillip Keller, in his book *“A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23”* picks up on this and says—

“Sometimes I feel we Christians should be much more like this. We should be proud to belong to Christ. Why shouldn’t we feel free to boast to others of how good our Shepherd is? How glad we should be to look back and recall all the amazing ways in which He has provided for our welfare. We should delight to describe in detail the hard experiences through which he has brought us, and we should be eager and quick to tell of our confidence in Christ. We should be bold to state fearlessly that we are so glad we are His. By the contentment and serenity of our lives, we should show what a distinct advantage it is to be a member of His household, of His flock.

I can never meditate on this last phrase in the Psalm, without their welling up in my memory, vivid scenes from some of the early days on my first sheep ranch. As winter, with its cold rains and chilling winds came on, my neighbor’s sickly sheep would stand huddled at the fence. Their tails to the storm facing the rich fields in which my flock flourished. Those poor abused neglected creatures under the ownership of a heartless shepherd had known nothing but suffering most of the year. With them there had been gnawing hunger all summer. They were thin

and sickly with disease and scab and parasites. Tormented by flies and attacked by predators, some were so weak and thin and wretched that their thin legs could scarcely bear their scanty frames. Always, there seemed to lurk in their eyes, the slender faint hope that perhaps with a bit of luck they could break through the fence or crawl through some hole to free themselves...

What a picture of Satan who holds ownership over so many. Right there the graphic account of Jesus portrayal of Himself as being the door and entrance by which sheep were to enter His fold, flashed across my mind."

Jesus said, *"I am the door: If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture."* (John 10:9)

But the Lord quickly added, if a person tries to enter into His flock by another 'door' (religion based on good works)—they would not be a real member of His flock and would be cast out.

Every day we rub shoulders with people who belong to Satan's 'flock.'

What kind of impression am I giving them of what it's like to belong to Jesus flock?

Does my life radiate joy and contentment (even in the face of adversity and sorrow)?

Can people look at me and come away with the impression that I'm a person who's truly happy and satisfied as a Christian?

Does my relationship with Jesus come across in such a way that people become envious?

Do we brag about our Shepherd's care to the point that we give people a longing to become one of His sheep?

Phillip Keller ends by saying—

“Almost every day, I am literally rubbing shoulders with men and women on the ‘other side of the fence.’ What is my impact upon them? Is my life so serene, so satisfying, and so radiant because I walk and talk and live with God that they become envious? Do they see in me the benefits of being under Christ’s control? Do they see something of Him reflected in my conduct and character? Does my life and conversation lead them to Him? If so, then I may be sure some of them will also long to dwell in the house of the Lord forever by making the decision to make Jesus their Shepherd as well.”

There is one last beautiful thought that David as the Lord’s sheep makes reference to—a thought the Amplified Bible brings out in its translation of this last verse of Psalm 23 which reads, *“I will dwell in the presence of the Lord forever.”*

In the Christian life this idea holds the key to peace, content, joy, and consecration because when all is said and done on the subject of a successful Christian walk—it can be summed up in one statement *“Live ever aware of God’s presence.”* (Elaborate)

In the life of Jesus’ sheep, we have gone from the beginning of our journey to its final destination—from the moment of salvation to our ultimate glorification—from **“The Lord is my Shepherd”** (on earth) to **“I will dwell in His house forever”** (in heaven).

But before we close the book on this incredible psalm, there is one more thing we need to consider—one more insight we need to explore—because there is one more meaning for **‘house’** in the Bible—and that is a heart.

Before you can dwell in the Lord’s house forever, He first has to dwell in your house right now—the house of your heart!

This is something Paul prayed for, not just for the Christians in Ephesus but for all Christians everywhere—*“that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith...”* (Eph. 3:17)

You might be thinking to yourself—*“Why is Paul praying that Jesus may dwell in their hearts—I thought he was writing this to Christians who already had Jesus living in their hearts?”*

It is true that Paul is writing to believers living in Ephesus—and it's also true that Jesus lives in the heart of every Christian the moment they receive Him into their heart by faith as Lord and Savior.

So, then what is Paul actually saying here?

The answer is found in the word **“dwell.”**

According to the Greek scholar Dr. Kenneth Wuest the verb literally means *“to settle down and feel at home.”*

Certainly, Jesus was already living in the hearts of the Ephesians, or else Paul would not have addressed them as *“saints”* in Ephesians 1:1.

What Paul is praying for is a deeper experience between Jesus and His people.

He yearns for Christ to settle down and feel at home in their hearts—not a surface relationship, but an ever-deepening loving communion!

However, Jesus will never feel at home in our hearts until He feels welcome and comfortable in every room and secret chamber of our hearts—otherwise He will go on feeling like a tolerated visitor.

Remember one thing—Jesus didn't force His way into your heart—you invited Him in!

He said in Revelation 3:20, *“Behold I stand at the door and knock—if anyone opens the door I will come in...”*

Notice the Lord didn't say, "*Behold I stand at the door and kick it open.*" He said, "*Behold I stand at the door and knock*"—it's up to us to open the door and let Him in.

There was an English artist named Holman Hunt who attempted to capture this scene on canvas—a painting which now hangs in St. Paul's Cathedral in London.

In that now famous painting, he pictured Jesus standing at the door of a neglected cottage, knocking to be let in.

One author describes the scene—

"Thistles have grown up the front wall and grass covers the entry walk. Vines, weeds, and rusty hinges in the painting convey a sense that nobody cares about the cottage or its residents. But standing at the door of this cottage is the kind King, Jesus Christ, holding a lantern from which the painting derives its title, 'The Light of the World.' The lantern light casts a warm glow over the front of the run-down home. And with His upraised right hand, Christ is knocking on the door."

When Holman Hunt first painted that scene in 1854, he invited his artist friends to come over and critique it.

After gazing at the painting intently one of them said to him, "*Holman, you have made a terrible mistake! You left off a very important part of the door!*"

Holman replied, "*What are you talking about?*" "*The handle, Holman—you left the handle off of the door!*"

"*Ah,*" Mr. Hunt replied, "*That was on purpose. You see this door is a picture of the human heart, and the handle of the door is only on the inside, for it's up to the one within to respond to the knock of Jesus.*"

Jesus will not force His way into a heart—He won't barge in where He's not welcome.

He's a perfect gentleman who knocks and says, "*If you'll respond to Me and open the door of your heart to Me, I'll come in and dwell with you—but the choice is up to you.*"

J. Vernon McGee—

“This is the picture of Christ we have in Revelation. He stands at the door and knocks. He will not crash the door. Regardless of what some extremists say on this matter of election, the Lord Jesus has moved heaven and hell to get to the door of your heart, but when He gets there, He will stop and knock—You will have to open the door to let Him in.”

Now, most of us here *have* made that choice—we heard His knock and said, “*Come in, Lord Jesus. Come into the home of my heart.*” And He did.

But now that He has come into our hearts, He won’t feel comfortable until He has full access to every room and closet so that He can clean out the junk and rearrange and redecorate things so that He really feels at home there.

(Talk about people who buy ‘fixer-uppers’ to gut and totally remake into the home they are comfortable in. That’s what happens when Jesus moves into our hearts—He does an “Extreme Makeover Heart Edition.”)

In his booklet *My Heart Christ’s Home*, Robert Munger pictures the Christian life as a house, through which Jesus goes from room to room.

In the library, which is the *mind*, Jesus finds trash and all sorts of worthless things, which He proceeds to throw out and replace with His Word.

In the dining room of appetite He finds many sinful desires listed on a worldly menu.

In the place of such things as prestige, materialism, and lust He puts humility, meekness, love, and all the other virtues for which believers are to hunger and thirst for.

He then comes to the living room of fellowship, where He finds many worldly companions and activities and replaces them with Christian companions (the family of God) and activities like church and Bible study.

Next the author pictures Jesus going through the workshop, where only toys are being made, and proceeds to replace worthless endeavors with the life-changing work of God (ministry).

And then the Lord focuses on the junk closets where hidden sins are kept and cleans them out—and so on through the entire house.

Only when He has cleaned every room, closet, and corner of sin, carnality and foolishness can He settle down and feel at home.

In case you're wondering, this process is called 'sanctification.'

William MacDonald—

"[Jesus Christ will never feel at home in our hearts until He has] full access to every room and closet; that He might not be grieved by sinful words, thoughts, motives, and deeds; that He might enjoy unbroken fellowship with the believer...In effect, the apostle prays that the lordship of Christ might extend to the books we read, the work we do, the food we eat, the money we spend, the words we speak—in short, the minutest details of our lives."

The problem with all too many Christians, when they invite Jesus into the house of their heart, is that—they lock Him in a 'back bedroom' somewhere and only bring Him out when they need His help.

They make most of their lives "*off limits*" to Him because they really don't want Him intruding into areas of their thought lives, their associations, how they spend their time and money etc.

Another problem with a lot of Christians is they have neglected their spiritual hearts so much and allowed them to grow so cold that Jesus feels unwelcome, unwanted and abandoned.

Again, using Holman Hunt's painting of Jesus standing at a door of a neglected cottage knocking to be let in.

Another author said this—

“How often I have seen Christians whose lives are represented by the neglected cottage in Holman Hunt’s famous painting. Where the fire of passion once filled the windows with the light of vibrant life, now only the dimness of passivity is evident. Once the pathway was packed firm and the grounds weeded and trimmed for the frequent, welcomed visitor, but now the threshold is rarely crossed. And the door that was always ajar in anticipation of the Master’s fellowship is now shut and locked from the inside against a friend who is now regarded as a stranger.”

Jesus loves you and is saying to you, *“It’s not too late to repent, it’s not too late to rekindle the fire that once burned bright in your heart for Me and renew the warmth of our relationship with one another.”*

Of course, the key to all of this is *faith* even as Paul stated in Ephesians 3:17—*“...that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith...”*

Why have you been languishing and losing heart in your walk—because your faith is failing.

The reality of Jesus’ relationship with you has grown cold and because of it your faith is dragging and doubt has taken hold of your heart—that He loves you, is with you, and maybe even doubt that He has saved you.

The solution: A fresh infusion of the Spirit to awaken your faith, so that you can begin to believe again—so pray.

The first thing to believe is the most fundamental fact of the Christian life—and that is that Jesus Christ *has* come to live in you; He has made your heart His home—whether you feel His presence within you or not!

And because of it, you will dwell in the house of the Lord forever!

This is a fact, a fact that is not dependent upon your feelings—feelings which ebb and flow.

It rests solely upon Jesus' promise given in the Upper Room in John 14:23—
"If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him."

And as recorded in Hebrews 13:5, "For He Himself has said, *"I will never leave you nor forsake you."*

This again, is what Paul was referring to in Ephesians 3:17 when he prayed that *"Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith..."*

You remind yourself that Jesus Christ lives in you, that He has taken up residence in you and that He will not leave you—no matter what!

He has made your heart His home—and that's forever!

Now stop ignoring Him or treating Him as an unwanted house guest and start looking at your heart as His new palace where He, as your King reigns and is to be treated with love, reverence and worship!

Let's relate this with the final statement of David when he declared triumphantly, **"I belong to Him and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever!"**

When you make Jesus your Shepherd He not only leads your life now through His Holy Spirit but prepares a place for you in His Father's house (Kingdom) forever!

What more could you hope for—what more do you need!

I heard the story of a little 4-year-old girl who was supposed to memorize Psalm 23 for her Sunday School class.

But when she stood up in front of her class, she was so nervous that instead of starting out with the words, **“The Lord is my Shepherd; I’ll shall not want.”**

She mistakenly said, *“The Lord is my Shepherd—and that’s all I want!”*

“Out of the mouths of babes You have perfected praise!”

I think she was on to something!

Hopefully, we also can say, **“The Lord is my Shepherd and He’s all I want!”**