

PSALM 23 | LINGERING IN THE CARE OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD

1. The LORD is *my* shepherd.

The “LORD” is Yahweh. The I AM, the covenanting God who is the God of Abraham, of Isaac, of Jacob.

This faithful God is my shepherd.

This is a deeply personal claim with deeply personal implications.

I am a sheep. Sheep are needy and vulnerable. Sheep quickly wander off, often follow each other into peril, and are **dependent on a shepherd for food, guidance and protection.**

2. The LORD is a *good* shepherd.

A. He PROVIDES everything I need so I shall not want.

He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads beside still waters. (v2)

All needed things are given, nothing is held back.

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies, you anoint my head with oil, my cup overflows. (v5)

We’re treated as anointed, honored guests, and lavished upon.

B. He GUIDES so I am carried home.

He restores my soul. v3

Literally, he returns me to life. When sheep, who are inclined to wander into dangerous places, go astray he pulls them back and restores them.

He leads me in paths of righteousness. v3

He leads me on the right path, the path that brings the sheep most directly to their destination.

Why does he do this? *For his name’s sake v3*

What moves God to help people is found in him.

He fulfills his commitments because he keeps his word.

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil v4

He leads me through places of uncertainty, distress and imminent danger, but I will not fear.

The reason we don’t fear is simple: *“for you are with me;” v4*

C. He PROTECTS so I am comforted.

your rod and your staff, they comfort me v4

The rod represents security from enemies.

The staff represents security from myself.

The LORD is faithful to provide, faithful to guide, and faithful to protect. So I shall not want, I shall be led home and I shall be comforted. Let's not assume that this is how it had to be.

Ezekiel 34:1-16. The word of the Lord came to me: "Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel; prophesy, and say to them, even to the shepherds, Thus says the Lord God: Ah, shepherds of Israel who have been feeding yourselves! Should not shepherds feed the sheep? You eat the fat, you clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fat ones, but you do not feed the sheep. The weak you have not strengthened, the sick you have not healed, the injured you have not bound up, the strayed you have not brought back, the lost you have not sought, and with force and harshness you have ruled them. So they were scattered, because there was no shepherd, and they became food for all the wild beasts. My sheep were scattered; they wandered over all the mountains and on every high hill. My sheep were scattered over all the face of the earth, with none to search or seek for them. "Therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the Lord: As I live, declares the Lord God, surely because my sheep have become a prey, and my sheep have become food for all the wild beasts, since there was no shepherd, and because my shepherds have not searched for my sheep, but the shepherds have fed themselves, and have not fed my sheep, therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the Lord: Thus says the Lord God, Behold, I am against the shepherds, and I will require my sheep at their hand and put a stop to their feeding the sheep. No longer shall the shepherds feed themselves. I will rescue my sheep from their mouths, that they may not be food for them. "For thus says the Lord God: Behold, I, I myself will search for my sheep and will seek them out. As a shepherd seeks out his flock when he is among his sheep that have been scattered, so will I seek out my sheep, and I will rescue them from all places where they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness. And I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them into their own land. And I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, by the ravines, and in all the inhabited places of the country. I will feed them with good pasture, and on the mountain heights of Israel shall be their grazing land. There they shall lie down in good grazing land, and on rich pasture they shall feed on the mountains of Israel. I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I myself will make them lie down, declares the Lord God. I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak, and the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them in justice

This is the setting to which Jesus comes down to tend his sheep.

3. The LORD is the *sacrificial* shepherd.

Matthew 9:36 When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.

John 10:11 I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

Jesus lays down his life for the sheep because he is the good shepherd.

Isaiah 53:6-7 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth.

Revelation 7:17 For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.

He lays his life down and our sin is laid on him so that he may lay us down in green pastures and guide us to springs of living water. Such is the goodness of this shepherd.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever. v6

- Is the LORD your shepherd? Do you recognize his voice?
- Are you allowing his kindness to lead you to restoration?
- Is his provision, guidance and protection transforming the way you lead and love those around you? (1 Thessalonians 5:14)