

#1 Strong In The Storm

8-5-26

Psalms 23 - The Shepherd Who Leads

I. Announce:

- A. Welcome to those joining online!!! (cam/straight)
- B. Slide1-6 REAL. [Single Moms](#). GriefShare/Loss Sp. Divorce Care. Employment Opp.
- C. Prayer: Good Shepherd. Sheep. 55 Heb words/Ps.23.

II. Slide7 Intro:

- A. Series: Strong in the Storm [Finding Confidence in God *through* the Psalms]
- B. Series Theme: **Storms** are inevitable. **Fear** is understandable. **But God's presence** is greater than our *circumstances*.
 - 1. These 4 psalms reveal that our confidence is not found in escaping life's storms, **but** in *walking through them* with **the God** who is our **Shepherd, Refuge, Shelter, and Keeper**.
- C. Slide8 Our first 1 in our series is the famous Psalm 23. *The Shepherd Who Leads*.
- D. Tonights Theme: *God faithfully leads His people through every season*.
- E. Big Idea: *We can trust the Shepherd because He knows the way and never leaves His sheep.*
- F. Psalm 23 has been a treasure for saints for over 3000 yrs. Yet it was **not** written from *a peaceful meadow*. It was written by **David**, a man who knew *caves, enemies, betrayal, disappointment, and loss*. He isn't writing theory, he's writing testimony. David is saying, *"I know this Shepherd."*
 - 1. Our series is called *Strong in the Storm* because the Christian life is **not** promised to be **storm free**. What God promises is something even better ... **we are never left to face life's storms alone!**
- G. Slide9 Read Psalm 23 slowly.
- H. David knew **shepherding** long before he knew **kingship**. Before he wore a crown, he carried a shepherd's staff. Every image in Psalm 23 comes from personal

experience. David simply looks back over his own life and realizes that the way he cared for sheep is the very way God has cared for him.

- I. **Psalm 23** helps if you are struggling with: *anxiety, depression, fear, lack of finances, lack of hope for the future, health problems, security & eternity*. - **PLUS** its message applies to *all the days of my life*, including right now. *And the regrets of yesterday. And the worries of tomorrow.*

III. Slide10a I. THE SHEPHERD PROVIDES (1-3a)

- A. *1 The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. 2 He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. 3 He restores my soul.*
- B. Can you imagine Him saying, *The Lord is my dog-catcher? The Lord is my pest control man? The Lord is my cattle rancher? Lion tamer?* A: Why Shepherd imagery? [One we can place our confidence in, trust His guidance, care for our lives]
- C. **My shepherd** - Everything begins with *relationship*.
- David does not first say, "*The Lord gives.*" He says, "*The Lord is.*"
 - Christianity begins with *who God is before what He gives.*
 - In Ps.80:1 *Asaph begins, Please listen, O Shepherd of Israel, you who lead Joseph's descendants like a flock.* (not Jesus here, but the Father). That's why it's so impressive in the NT that **Jesus is the Good, Great & Chief Shepherd.** He takes on the title of God the Father, showing His deity.
 - Rev.7:17a *For the Lamb on the throne will be their Shepherd. He will lead them to springs of life-giving water.*
- D. **Notice the word my** - **Not** simply Israel's Shepherd. **Not** merely the world's Shepherd. *My Shepherd.* [Faith is personal].
- E. **I shall not want** - A: **means?** (lack) - doesn't promise that God gives us everything we desire. It promises that we will never lack what our Shepherd knows we truly need.
- A **shepherd** had to care for **his sheep's mental/emotional state**... otherwise *they would not eat.*

2. Sometimes He gives **abundance**. Sometimes He gives **enough**.
Sometimes He simply gives **Himself**.

F. He makes me lie down in green pastures - A: means? Sheep will not lie down unless they feel **completely safe**. *Philip Keller notes that sheep must be free from fear, conflict, pests, and hunger before they will finally rest.*

1. Many people know how to **sleep**, far fewer know how to **rest**. Jesus invites *weary souls* into **that kind of rest**.

G. Slide10b Ezek.34:15 ***I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I myself will make them lie down, declares the Lord God.***

1. If you are a sheep prone to **business**... He makes you to **lie down**.
If you are a sheep prone to **laziness**... He makes you to **get up ;)**

H. Remember in biblical times sheep never grazed in farmland. Israel is **desert**.

1. It's a little tuft of grass here and there. **1% rainfall?** [moisture from the Mediterranean sea blowing in, hitting rocks, which spring *tufts of grass*].

a) God never desired to plop you down in green pastures, where you never have to get up again. (just reach over and grab a handful anytime you're hungry).

(1) **Has your walk/life with God been like that? No.**

b) A rabbi said, *worry is dealing with tomorrow's problem on today's pasture.*

c) In the desert you learn, *the shepherd* will get you what you need for **right now**, and in **10 minutes** from now. You **trust the shepherd**...for just enough.

I. He leads me beside still waters - A: means? Fast-moving streams frightened sheep because they could easily be swept away.

1. The Shepherd leads them where they can safely drink. Calm/peaceful.

2. Sometimes God does not calm every storm around us, **but** He always knows where **our soul can be refreshed**.

3. The shepherd would sometimes have to dam up fast moving water. He's our Shepherd not only **in crisis times** but in the **common times** also, so we can **drink on a daily basis**.

J. He restores my soul - The word restore means to *revive, refresh, and bring back*.

1. God specializes in restoring **weary** people.

K. Are you trying to provide for **yourself** what only **the Shepherd** can give?

When was the last time **your soul** truly **rested**? [soul = a person's moral or emotional nature **or** sense of identity]

IV. Slide11 II. THE SHEPHERD GUIDES (3a-4a)

A. *3a He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. 4 Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil,*

B. **He leads me** in paths of righteousness for his name's sake -

1. Notice how active the Shepherd is: *He makes. He leads. He restores. He leads again.* - The Christian life is not merely believing doctrines, it is *following a Shepherd*. [**He leads me** - **not drives me!**]

C. **Paths of righteousness** - are not only *morally right* paths. They are the right paths - the paths God knows are best for us.

1. Sometimes they are easy. Sometimes they lead through difficult places. But they are always good.

D. **For his name's sake** - **God's reputation** is connected to **His people**.

1. **A good shepherd** does not abandon his flock **because His own name** is attached to them. **God's faithfulness** ultimately rests on His own **character**.

2. Following Jesus often requires **trust** before *understanding*. Usually He reveals the next step, **not** the entire journey.

V. Slide12a III. THE SHEPHERD PROTECTS (4) [this is the center of the Psalm]

A. *4 Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death* (deep darkness), *I will fear no evil, for **you** are with me; **your** rod and **your** staff, they comfort me.*

B. What do you see as a word of comfort in the 1st phrase? (*through*).

1. David **does not say** we **avoid** valleys, **or** walk into them **to stay**. He says **we walk through them**. [valleys are inevitable, **but** they are **never** intended to become *our permanent home*]
 2. **Slide12b** The greatest comfort in the valley is **not** *the absence of danger*, **it is the presence of the Shepherd**.
- C. Notice the change: *The Lord... He... He...* suddenly becomes, *You - Your - Your*.
1. **The darkest valleys** often produce our deepest fellowship with God.
- D. Your rod and your staff, they comfort me (grab props) - **A:** what **comfort** do you sheep get from a shepherd with 2 sticks?
1. The **rod** protected sheep from predators. The **staff** gently rescued wandering sheep. **One defended - one corrected**. Both were expressions of love.
- E. A frightened child is only comforted by **dad/mom** walking into the room. **Presence changes everything!**
- F. What valley are you walking through today? How would your perspective change if you truly believed **Jesus** was **walking every step beside you?**

VI. **Slide13a** **IV. THE SHEPHERD BLESSES (5-6)**

- A. The imagery now changes. David is no longer describing a *shepherd in the fields*. He is describing **a gracious host** welcoming him into his home.
- B. *5 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. 6 Surely goodness and mercy (unfailing love) shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever.*
- C. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies -
1. Notice the **enemies** are still there. Peace does not require perfect circumstances, **God can give peace in the middle of conflict**.
 2. **Slide13b** Example: 2 Sam.17:27-29 (where God did this for David) *Absalom chasing*
 3. Ps.78:19b **They spoke against God, saying Can God spread a table in the wilderness? Yep!**

D. You anoint my head with oil - A: Oil represented? [*honor, healing, refreshment, and joyful welcome*]

E. My cup overflows - A: means? - God is never stingy.

1. His grace is always greater than our need.

F. Surely **goodness** and **mercy** shall follow me - Slide13c (Ironside, 2 sheep dogs, that keep sheep where they belong). The Hebrew word translated *follow* is much stronger ... think *follow in pursuit*/pursue us.

1. David once had enemies pursuing him. Now he says something else is chasing him every day. *God's goodness. God's covenant love.*

G. I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever - A: means? - The Shepherd's care *never ends*. [the destination is *not* simply *heaven*, the destination is *home!*] diff?

VII. Slide14a CHRIST CONNECTION

A. Psalm 23 finds its fullest meaning in Jesus.

1. David knew God as his Shepherd, we know the Shepherd by name.

B. Jesus declared, ***I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.*** John 10:11

1. Jesus not only **leads** His sheep. He **dies for** His sheep. He **risers for** His sheep. He **calls** His sheep by name. He **searches** for wandering sheep. He **carries** weak sheep. He **promises** that no one can snatch them from His hand.

C. **Conclusion** - Psalm 23 invites us to *lay down the staff* we've been trying to hold, and **trust** the One who has *never lost a single sheep who belongs to Him.*

1. He knows **your name**. He knows **your path**. He knows **your fears**. He knows **every valley** you will ever walk through. And because He walks **with you** ... *you never walk alone!*

D. Slide14b **Each** of the OT names for God is seen in this psalm:

1. **Jehovah-Jireh** - The Lord will provide. (Gen. 22:13-14)
Jehovah-Rapha - The Lord will heal or restore. (Ex. 15:26)
Jehovah-Shalom - The Lord our peace. (Jdg. 6:24)
Jehovah-Tsidkenu - The Lord our righteousness. (Jer. 23:6)
Jehovah-Shammah - The Lord is there. (Ezek. 48:35)
Jehovah-Nissi - The Lord our banner. (Ex. 17:8-15)
Jehovah-Raah - The Lord my shepherd. (Ps. 23:1)
 - a) In other words, **Jesus Christ is to His sheep all that they ever need.**
 - b) **The Lord is my shepherd - what more shall I want?**

E. **Prayer:** Father, you are our faithful provider, wise guide, loving protector, and generous blessing. Teach us to rest in Your care, to follow Your voice. **Help us to remember that no matter what valley we walk through, You are always with us.** Thank You for sending our Good Shepherd, who laid down His life for us sheep, **and** now leads us safely ... all the way home.

F. Keywords: shepherd, valleys, leads.

- G. **Contemplation:** Is He **your** shepherd tonight? What's your **position** to Him? (next to His side? nearby? running away? Out on a cliff?)
1. Do you feel what God has given you "green" enough? (or do you feel its **brown** pasture land?) Have you been disgruntled that you thought your life would be "greener"?
 2. If **worry** was defined by *dealing with tomorrow's problem on today's pasture*, how might you reframe your mind/mindset regarding tomorrow?
 3. Do you ever feel that God has placed you by *roaring rapids* instead of **calm water**?
 4. Do you ever feel he **drives** you instead of **leads** you? (when He said *follow Me*, does that tip us off to His leadership style?)