

Psalm 23 - *NKJV

A Psalm of David.

23 *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.*

INTRO to series “Summer in Psalms” – The Hebrew Psalms in our Bible are filled with ancient prayers, poems, laments, hymns, and spiritual songs written by God’s people throughout many generations. As the Holy Spirit spoke through them, their words of praise and faith were collected into five books with 150 different psalms.

Our Summer series will survey several of the Psalms which proclaim God’s faithfulness in all generations. They also call on us to trust the Lord in our own generation, seeking His best purposes in our homes, our church, and the world in which we live. A special part of this summer series will be the incorporation of music and singing led by our worship teams based on the Psalms we study.

INTRO to **Psalm 23**: This is best known of psalms but often misunderstood. Psalm 23 is not about death; it is about life! Even though Psalm 23 is written from a first-person perspective, this psalm is not about “me,” but rather it is about the Lord.

I. The Lord guides, protects, and provides for us as our truly Good Shepherd. (vs. 1-4)

-Throughout Scripture, the metaphor a shepherd and sheep somehow includes the entire flock – such as God leading all the people of Israel out of Egypt, or leading the exiles back from Babylon; but here David’s psalm makes the relationship personal to the individual level: “*The Lord is MY Shepherd, I shall not want. He makes ME to lie down in green pastures. He leads ME beside still waters. He restores MY soul.*”

-Leading me besides still waters is peaceful, but also providential in that the Lord will make sure I am nourished sufficiently.

-The words used for “restores my soul” (**vs. 3a**) mean literally – “He brings back my life breath.” This is the picture of God’s work to restore us and raise us to life in Christ, and to “bring us back” into His presence and in a right relationship with Him and the rest of the flock.

-Jesus’ parable in **Luke 15:1-7** (see below) tells us how a faithful shepherd brings back a sheep that has gone astray – “He picks it up, *he joyfully puts it on his shoulders*, and He carries the sheep home.”

-He leads me on the path of righteousness for His Name’s sake (**vs. 3b**) – which means both in accordance with His character and promises, and also for the purpose of glorifying His Name.

-“The valley of the shadow of death” (**vs. 4**) would be imagery very familiar to ancient people and especially shepherds, as they could expect to face great danger in the narrow valleys of Israel with jagged rocks and potential of floods or sandstorms.

-Yet even in the worst or most dangerous circumstances, Psalm 23 reminds that I can trust in the Lord because my security is not found in my circumstances or my environment, but in my Shepherd who protects me with His rod and guides me with His staff!

II. The Lord welcomes, blesses, and establishes us as our Loving Father. (vs. 5-6)

-**Psalm 23** moves from the Shepherd and His sheep to the Father/Host and those who dine at His table. The beginning of the psalm described food and drink for a sheep, but now describes food and drink for a person.

-As a gracious host and loving Father, the Lord prepares for us a table with all the elements of a joy filled setting—great food to eat, the sweet smell of olive oils rubbed into the hair, and a cup overflowing with drink.

-This setting also happens before those considered enemies, who will yet see God’s goodness displayed to and through His people.

-All that God does for us and gives to from His blessings now, will only continue and increase: *Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me All the days of my life...* (**vs. 6b**)

-The House of the Lord mentioned in **vs. 6b** is neither the Tabernacle nor the Temple of the Israelites, but rather the place Jesus has prepared for us in the Father’s house, our heavenly home not made by human hands (see **John 14:1-6** below).

Other Scriptures Referenced:

Isaiah 40:11: *He tends his flock like a shepherd:*

*He gathers the lambs in his arms
and carries them close to his heart;
he gently leads those that have young.*

Luke 15:3-7: *Then Jesus told them this parable: 4 “Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Doesn’t he leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? 5 And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders 6 and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, ‘Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.’ 7 I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.*

John 10:11, 14 – The Good Shepherd: *“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep...*

14 “I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me—”

1 Peter 5:4 – The Chief Shepherd: *And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.*

Hebrews 13:20 – That Great Shepherd of the Sheep: *Now may the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, 21 equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.*

John 14:1-3, 6: *“Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. 2 My Father’s house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am... 6 Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”*

Other Quotes/Resources:

-“When you say, ‘The Lord is my Shepherd,’ no proper grounds are left for you to trust in yourself.” –St. Augustine

-From Isaac Watts Hymn, “My Shepherd Will Supply My Need”:

*He brings my wandering spirit back,
When I forsake His ways;
And leads me, for His mercy’s sake,
In paths of truth and grace.*