

Psalms - The Valley

Today we are in the 23rd Psalm.

Psalm 23:1-6 (NKJV)

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 is a Psalm of David. We often think of David the King...but first David was a shepherd...a good shepherd. He was the shepherd for his father's flocks from childhood and he writes this Psalm from a place of experience.

David knows the kind of relationship a shepherd has with his sheep...and he shows us this relationship with God, the shepherd of our soul.

The Lord is my shepherd!

There was a Sunday school teacher that required all of her class to learn the 23rd Psalm so they could recite it before the church. All of the kids were excited except one, little Bobby. Bobby was shy and had a hard time memorizing the Psalm.

So when the day came to recite it, Bobby got to the back of the line. One by one the children recited Psalm 23 with smiles and joy. When it was Bobby's turn, he grabbed the mic, cleared his throat and boldly said "The Lord is my Shepherd"

There was a pause for several seconds.

Then with an even louder voice he continued..."That's all I need to know!"

Church...that's all you need to know! Is the Lord YOUR Shepherd?

Psalm 23:1-3a (NKJV)

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;

If Jesus is my shepherd...and a shepherd takes care of His sheep...then it means He provides what we need.

I shall not want does not actually mean you can't want anything. It actually means that you don't lack anything you need!

Matthew 6:31-33 (NKJV)

"Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' 32 For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. 33 But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.

Jesus takes care of His sheep!

He makes you lie down in green pastures, leads you beside the still waters...

When a shepherd would lead the sheep to green pastures...it was a place of feeding but also of rest...Some of you are so worn out...you work so hard...you're so busy...you need to heed the leading of the Holy Spirit and LIE DOWN for a while...

See the nice, full, green grass is cool. It's restful.

Then He will lead you beside the still water...a place of refreshing. The still water is what sheep drink. They don't like running water. They've been tired, they don't want to work for a drink...

Jesus uses this time of rest and refreshing to restore your soul. You bring your mind, will, emotions back to where they need to be...at rest and peaceful.

Psalm 23:3b (NKJV)

He leads me in the paths of righteousness

For His name's sake.

Last week we talked about God's character, and about how He is righteous...did you realize that He leads us down the path of righteousness...that means you're not alone.

HE LEADS. Jesus went before you. He came and conquered.

Have you ever been with some friends and you try to get them to do something that looks a little risky, or difficult, or a little dangerous? They're like, nah...but if you go first...and show them how it CAN be done. They are more likely to follow.

Jesus leads you down the path of righteousness and the Psalm says He does it for HIS NAME'S SAKE.

It's about His reputation...being true to His character. If He said it, it is done. Jesus said He'll never abandon you...and He won't.

Somebody needs to grab ahold of this today...that He does it for His name's sake...it's not dependent on YOU or what you do or what you don't do...it's dependent on what HE SAID!

And so NOW if you understand that Jesus is faithful...it changes everything about the valleys!

Psalm 23:4 (NKJV)

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.

Though I walk through the valley.

You know the beginning of this Psalm is great...I get to lie down, I get some water to drink. I'm rested and refreshed. Jesus is leading me down the path of righteousness....

It really sounds like a nice time...doesn't it? And then you get to verse 4...and David starts talking about the valley...

Remember David is a shepherd talking from experience....BUT why do sheep need to go through the valley if it is such a difficult path?

Shepherds would take their flock on a long journey to the mountains at least once a year. During the spring they would graze in the fields near their home when the mountains were covered with snow.

Then in the summer, they seek new fields up in the hills.

They take the route through the valleys because it's cooler under the summer heat and it's well watered.

So it's a harder path...it's not easy...BUT it's necessary. It has what they need in order to GET TO the mountain top.

Can I tell you there are difficulties in the valley? And there are difficulties in life?

There are days in the valley when the sun doesn't shine as bright. Things look gloomy. But you can't avoid the valley. Valleys are inevitable. Sometimes they are the only way to get to the mountain top.

So often we wonder why we're in the valley instead of trusting where God is leading us to.

There will be persecution and problems in life. There will be difficult days and seasons.

Everyone will face them. But HE IS WITH YOU IN THE VALLEY!

David reminds us of this certainty that we WILL walk through the valley...so the question is this:
HOW WILL YOU RESPOND TO THE VALLEY?

I will fear no evil;
For You are with me;
Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.

You know the enemy likes to make us think that we are alone in the valley and that we are stuck in the valley. Because when we believe we are alone and stuck we are hopeless...

We focus on the fact that we are IN the valley but the Psalm says "I walk THROUGH the valley"!

But there are keys to walking through instead of getting stuck in the valley.

Who likes to ride roller coasters? Who's been on one that scared you just a little. You know the kind that you wondered how you got here and couldn't wait for it to end?

I've grabbed that bar or shoulder restraint and reminded myself that I was secure. That I was safe. That I was protected. And once I did, I didn't fear falling out! I knew I could get through the ride...besides wasn't I stuck on it anyway?

This is what it's like going through the valley...The Holy Spirit is with you. You are secure, safe, protected...you don't have to fear!

In the midst of fearful times...declare your victory in Jesus!

David says I will walk. I will not fear. I will get through!

This is about having our life in perspective. Walk THROUGH the valley. Because sometimes you have to walk through the valley to reach new pastures!

He Leads You

David found comfort in focusing on the Shepherd. He saw what the Shepherd was holding in His hands.

He saw the rod and the staff...think protection and direction.

ROD - the rod was not used to beat the sheep...stop believing that God is punishing you in the valley...the rod is to protect you. It's to fight off the attacks that come in the valley.

What does that tell us? There will be attacks in the valley.

When it rains it pours. Right? Well God's your umbrella! Get under His protection!

STAFF - the staff was for direction...moreso redirection. You know how it's curved at the end? That's to gently grab a sheep by the neck to redirect it back to the path the shepherd is leading them on!

Church that is what Jesus has for you in the valley...a rod to protect you, a staff to redirect you.

This should bring you comfort...He's leading you THROUGH...

YOU WILL GET OUT...but don't look for the way out...look at the Shepherd!

He's not watching you from a distance just hoping you find your way out...He's with you...He's actively involved in your journey.

If you have accepted Jesus as Lord and Savior...then you are HIS sheep...and He is a Good Shepherd!

John 10:11 (NKJV)

"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep.

Jesus is the Good Shepherd! He gave His life for the sheep...

You know David was a good shepherd...again, he wrote this Psalm from a place of experience...but there was a time when David was tending to his sheep and fought off a lion and a bear!

If you haven't got a picture of that yet...a man with a rod that probably looked like a big walking stick...had fought off both a bear and a lion who wanted to attack his sheep...

He was willing to give his life for the sheep...but with God's help he fought them off.

Jesus fought off a greater enemy than a lion or a bear. He literally gave His life to protect us and save us from satan's grasp...

But who do you follow? Do you know the Good Shepherd?

There was a famous man who was the guest speaker at a fundraiser. He invited the audience to choose a poem for him to recite.

After a long silence...a retired pastor raised his hand...he asked for the 23rd Psalm.

The actor was a little surprised but agreed to do so as long as the pastor would recite it after him.

The actor recited Psalm 23 and received a standing ovation. Then the old pastor stood and recited the Psalm. When he was finished, there was not a dry eye in the place...the speaker came over and gave a few closing words

"The difference between his version and my version is that I know the 23rd Psalm...and he knows the Shepherd."

Do you know the Good Shepherd?

Do you truly know Him and truly trust Him?

Because He will lead you through the valley...and new pasture and blessing is on the other side!

Psalm 23:5-6 (NKJV)

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.