**“He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name’s sake.**”Psalm 23:3b

**Good Morning Beloved,**

* Written almost 200 years ago…
	+ 1. Savior, like a shepherd lead us,
	Much we need Thy tender care;
	In Thy pleasant pastures feed us,
	For our use Thy folds prepare;
	Blessed Jesus, blessed Jesus,
	Thou hast bought us, Thine we are;
	Blessed Jesus, blessed Jesus,
	Thou hast bought us, Thine we are.
	+ 2. We are Thine, do Thou befriend us,
	Be the guardian of our way;
	Keep Thy flock, from sin defend us,
	Seek us when we go astray;
	Blessed Jesus, blessed Jesus,
	Hear, O hear us when we pray;
	Blessed Jesus, blessed Jesus,
	Hear, O hear us when we pray.

Reading of God’s Word

***23****A Psalm of David.*

***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.*

 *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,*

 *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 overflows.*

***6*** *Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me*

*all the days of my life,*

 *and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord*

*forever. [[1]](#footnote-1)*

**Preaching God’s Word**

1. He leads me…
	1. Sheep need to be led.
		1. They have absolutely NO intuition about what is best for them.
			1. Shepherds who travel to Spain, Greece, Mesopotamia, North Africa, the western US, and Australia can take you to once lust grasslands that have now become wastelands….
				1. For one reason… sheep.
		2. One shepherd described the effects of letting a tenant farmer put sheep on the land thinking that they would act like cattle….[[2]](#footnote-2)
			1. Fields overgrazed…
			2. Poverty grass only remained…
			3. Trails deteriorated into gullies…
			4. Slopes eroded…
		3. In that environment, parasites flourish…
			1. Worms… scabs… nematods…
				1. Pollution in the land… produces a sick flock.
		4. Solution – “The greatest single safeguard which a shepherd has in handling his flock is to keep them on the move” (Keller)
			1. Having a plan that maximizes the health of the land and the vitality of the sheep leads to one thing… a good reputation for the Shepherd.
	2. A good shepherd will guide his flock daily to a place that…
		1. Protects the sheep from wild beasts…
		2. Provides for the flocks needs.
			1. Some itinerant shepherds set up a base camp and fan out in wide circles… like how a clover leaves has leaves.
			2. Others use differing fields, but move the flock between grain fields without letting the sheep eat there.
	3. The word of God describes us as sheep.
		1. If left to ourselves… we would consume lush grassland and make it a wasteland.
			1. Pro. 14:12 *-* ***12****There is a way that seems right to a man,
			    but its end is the way to death*.
				1. Pride postures as discernment
				2. Fear masquerades as wisdom
				3. Anger pretends to be righteousness
				4. Lust presents itself as pleasure
				5. Wickedness describes itself as freedom
				6. Gossip tastes like delectable morsels

Pro. 6:16ff - ***16****There are six things that the Lord hates,
    seven that are an abomination to him:****17****haughty eyes, a lying tongue,
    and hands that shed innocent blood,****18****a heart that devises wicked plans,
    feet that make haste to run to evil,****19****a false witness who breathes out lies,
    and one who sows discord among brothers.*

* + 1. Rather than let his sheep forage in an infested ground of “I want”s.
	1. The Good Shepherd in our passage leads David.
		1. God leads, conducts, guides me.
			1. *treating kindly (the helpless) [[3]](#footnote-3)*
				1. He goes before me…

The butcher drives the flock from the rear… the shepherd leads the flock from the front.

* + 1. David is savoring the kindness of God’s faithfulness just like Moses did in his generation after the Exodus.
			1. Exodus 15 - ***11****“Who is like you, O Lord, among the gods?
			    Who is like you, majestic in holiness,
			    awesome in glorious deeds, doing wonders?****12****You stretched out your right hand;
			    the earth swallowed them.*
			2. ***13****“You have led in your steadfast love the people whom you have redeemed;
			    you have guided them by your strength to your holy abode.*
	1. Application: the semi-arid pastureland of Judah in the Spring points to the faithfulness of God in every season of life.[[4]](#footnote-4)
		1. Spurgeon – “There is far more of the hand of god in our life than there is of our own hand, if our life is what it ought to be… We can truly say that we have been divinely led until now and although the journey has been like that of the children of Israel in the wilderness – in and out, backwards and forwards, progressing and then retrograding, and often standing still – yet the Lord has led us by the right way to this present moment.”
	2. Question: Are you being led by God NOW?
		1. Are you flirting with something that is not good?
			1. Psa. 139:24 - ***24****And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!*
		2. Are you cherishing something that is forbidden TODAY?
			1. Psa. 51 -*1**Have mercy on me, O God,
			    according to your steadfast love;
			according to your abundant mercy
			    blot out my transgressions.****2****Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,
			    and cleanse me from my sin!*
		3. Are you tempted to quit because things are hard?
			1. Psa. 143:9-10 - ***9****Deliver me from my enemies, O Lord!
			    I have fled to you for refuge.****10****Teach me to do your will,
			    for you are my God!
			Let your good Spirit lead me
			    on level ground!*
	3. Transition: Ask God… your shepherd… to lead you…
1. …in paths of righteousness…
	1. The word here has the idea of being on “wagon-tracks… or firm paths”
		1. What does this mean…
			1. John Calvin – “by paths of righteousness, he means easy and plain paths”[[5]](#footnote-5)
	2. Two thoughts…
		1. #1 – Right direction
			1. Sheep need to be put in the right place to be feed and protected.
				1. Proverbs 2:6ff - ***6****For the Lord gives wisdom;
				    from his mouth come knowledge and understanding;****7****he stores up sound wisdom for the upright;
				    he is a shield to those who walk in integrity,****8****guarding the paths of justice
				    and watching over the way of his saints.****9****Then you will understand righteousness and justice
				    and equity, every good path;****10****for wisdom will come into your heart,
				    and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul;****11****discretion will watch over you,
				    understanding will guard you,*
				2. Application:

Are you listening to the WORD of GOD every day (vs. 6)?

Are you thanking your Father that He cares for you every day (vs. 7-8)?

Are you asking for wisdom in your habits… are your habits marked by justice, integrity, and equity (vs. 9-11)?

* + 1. #2 – Right conduct
			1. In the paths of righteousness (or *in right paths* ESV) there is a conduct among the sheep.
				1. It is a blessing… NOT a burden to be led by God in paths of righteousness.

Psalm 25:3ff - ***4****Make me to know your ways, O Lord;
    teach me your paths.****5****Lead me in your truth and teach me,
    for you are the God of my salvation;
    for you I wait all the day long.*

* + - 1. There is a gladness to be among the path that God directs us on.
				1. Sheep have NO intuition about what would be best for them…
			2. Beloved, we… human sheep… don’t know the best thing for ourselves… but the path of righteousness is taught this way…
				1. Mark 8:34ff - ***34****And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.****35****For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it.****36****For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?****37****For what can a man give in return for his soul?*
	1. Application (thank you Keller)…
		1. The right direction and right paths looks like…
			1. Loving Christ best and others more than myself (1 John 3:16)
			2. Standing up for what is right even when it is not popular
			3. Not insisting on my rights, but a willingness to forego them in favor of others
			4. Instead of finding fault with life and always asking “Why?”… accept challenges and blessings as both coming from the Shepherd.
			5. Not fighting God for my way… but following Christ in his way by simple obedience.
				1. Turn the other cheek?
				2. Repay what you have taken?
				3. Fulfill what you promised?
				4. Share what you have received?
	2. Transition: Why would you ever do such a matter?
1. for his name’s sake.
	1. For Human shepherds… the reputation of shepherds is linked to the protection of the sheep.
		1. A shepherd takes care of sheep for a couple of reasons (from the internet)…
			1. The point… the shepherd is getting something from the sheep themselves.
				1. **Wool:** A primary product, used for clothing, blankets, carpets, and other textiles.
				2. **Meat:** "Lamb" refers to the meat of young sheep, while "mutton" refers to the meat of older sheep.
				3. **Milk:** Sheep milk can be used to make cheese and other dairy products.
				4. **Lanolin:** A natural oil secreted by sheep, used in moisturizing creams and other skincare products.
				5. **Tallow:** The rendered fat of sheep, used in making candles and soap.
				6. **Leather:** Sheepskins can be tanned and used to make leather goods.
				7. **Manure:** Sheep manure is a valuable fertilizer.
				8. **Intestines:** Used in the production of items like tennis racket strings and surgical sutures.
		2. Another view… the sheep keeps up the good fame of the shepherd.
			1. By doing kind things for the sheep… others will think well of the shepherd.
	2. In contrast to both those thoughts… where the sheep would be benefiting the shepherd…
		1. Our passage is saying in the words of John Calvin…
			1. “ … God is in no respect wanting to his people, seeing he sustains them by his power, invigorates and quickens them, and averts from them what-ever is hurtful, that they may walk at ease in plain and straight paths.
			2. That, however, he may not ascribe any thing to his own worth or merit, David represents the goodness of God as the cause of so great liberality, declaring that God bestows all these things upon him for his own name's sake.
			3. And certainly his choosing us to be his sheep, and his performing towards us all the offices of a shepherd, is a blessing which proceeds entirely from his free and sovereign goodness…”
2. Conclusion
	1. Beloved, the Good Shepherd knows that we are like sheep…
		1. Sin has blinded up and by our own intuition we would eat up good grasses from the roots… gnaw on dirt… and be infested with parasites.
			1. Rather than following God’s leadership in paths of righteousness…
				1. Isaiah 53:6 - ***6****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.*
		2. But for the honor of God’s name… his reputation… his glory… and his wisdom…
			1. The Good Shepherd became like a sheep on the Cross…
				1. Isaiah 53:7 - ***7****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.*
		3. So that you would be led to savor not on the providence of God in every moment of your life…
			1. But also the free gift of salvation in eternal life… For Jesus Christ is both Shepherd and Savior….
				1. Isaiah 53:4-5 - *Surely he has borne our griefs
				    and carried our sorrows;
				yet we esteemed him stricken,
				    smitten by God, and afflicted.****5****But he was pierced for our transgressions;
				    he was crushed for our iniquities;
				upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace,
				    and with his wounds we are healed.*
	2. David would later say…
		1. Psalm 138:1ff - *I give you thanks, O Lord, with my whole heart;
		    before the gods I sing your praise;****2****I bow down toward your holy temple
		    and give thanks to your name for your steadfast love and your faithfulness,
		    for you have exalted above all things
		    your name and your word.*
			1. In an amazing way… God vindicates his name by leading you love and caring for you in faithfulness.
				1. Therefore we can boldly affirm…

*He leads me in paths of righteousness for His name’s sake.*

1. [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](https://ref.ly/logosres/esv?ref=BibleESV.Ps23.title&off=24&ctx=Lord+Is+My+Shepherd%0a~23%C2%A0A+Psalm+of+David.) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ps 23:title–6. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Phillip Keller, *A Shepherd looks at Psalm 23.* [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Francis Brown, Samuel Rolles Driver, and Charles Augustus Briggs, [*Enhanced Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*](https://ref.ly/logosres/bdb?ref=BrownDriverBriggs.BDB+635.1&off=150&ctx=.+B.%E2%80%94%3b+of+guiding+%3d+~treating+kindly+(the) (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), 635. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Heidelberg Catechism – “…the eternal Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who out of nothing created heaven and earth and everything in them, who still upholds and rules them by his eternal counsel and providence, is my God and Father because of Christ the Son. I trust God so much that I do not doubt he will provide whatever I need
for body and soul, and will turn to my good whatever adversity he sends upon me in this sad world. God is able to do this because he is almighty God and desires to do this because he is a faithful Father. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. John Calvin, *The Book of Psalms, 393.* [↑](#footnote-ref-5)