

The Lord is My Shepherd pt.7

We continue in our series looking at Psalm 23.

And the Lord has been pleased to unfold, in His word, what have been and are deeply encouraging and soul edifying truths!

And I trust, by the help of the Spirit, He will be pleased to encourage and edify us some more! Amen!

So, if you have your copy of God's word... (Read text)

As you know, we have approached this Psalm by asking and answering two basic questions that are actually the greatest and most important two questions you can ever ask.

The questions are:

1. "Who is God?" and
2. "Who is God to Me?"

And the reason why these are the most important questions is because the answers cause us to consider and recognize God! And how this God relates to us!

All of life hinges upon "Who is God?" and "Who is God to me?"

Nothing is more important in the world than this.

In answering the first question of "Who is God?", God was pleased to remind us of His GREATNESS and GOODNESS !

His greatness is seen in the fact that He is the **transcendent** God, from whom all things, visible and invisible owe their existence to!

His greatness is seen in the fact that all bow to Him and He bows to no one!

(Which is another way to say that God *has* to exist, and everything else gets to exist!)

His greatness is seen in that He is self-sufficient!

- He has no limitations
- He has no equals,
- He has no peers
- He has no rivals,
- He has no competitors,
- He has no challengers

Oh, sure, Satan and people try to challenge, rival and compete with God!

But they are only able to do it because God continues to keep them in existence!

Their competition with God is equivalent to an ant trying to challenge an elephant to a wrestling match!

There simply is no competition between the two!

God's greatness is seen in that He is the **ONLY** one worthy of worship, honor and praise!

He is majestically exalted!

Our Lord is great and is greatly to be praised!

The Lord is not only great, but He is good!

His goodness is seen in that He displays His love and care for all His creatures!

He is abundant in His grace and mercy!

He forgives,

- heals,
- soothes,
- guides,
- provides,
- protects,
- keeps,
- guards,
- shelters
- preserves
- and strengthens

He gives peace.

- Increases faith
- Secures Hope
- Comforts the soul

This is His goodness!

This is the Lord, He is GREAT and He is GOOD!!

But how does this great and good God relate to us?

“Who is this God to me?” is the second question.

And we are told that He relates to us as a Shepherd, “The Lord is my Shepherd!”

As we looked at God, who is our shepherd, we did so under two headings.

- 1. The Shepherd’s Initiative and**
- 2. The Shepherd’s Care**

In the Shepherd's Initiative, we were reminded of the **sovereign prerogative** of the Shepherd to select the sheep, who will be part of His flock *and* the means by which they will enter.

He determined that He would save us through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead!

His life!, His death!, His resurrection!, Grants us access into the sheepfold!

And all of it is because God, the good Shepherd took the initiative to make us His sheep. This is the Shepherd's Initiative.

As we considered the Shepherds' Care, we were reminded of how He cares for us as His sheep!

First, we saw...

1. He Provide (v. 1)

Secondly

2. He Leads/Guides us (vv. 2–3)

And as we came to v. 4, we noticed that David lists another way the Shepherd cares for us, and that is by **being present with us!** (v. 4, read)

And as we looked at this, we noted that David does not shy from the fact that there are times when you, as a sheep, will find yourself in the valley of deep dark!

And more than this, we considered the fact that we enter these valleys *because we have been brought there by our shepherd!*

Far from suffering being random, or something caused by the devil...**our suffering is orchestrated and arranged by our sovereign God and Shepherd!**

God has determined, according to His **KIND, LOVING, GOOD AND GRACIOUS** will that suffering is what is **necessary** to grow you! (Did you hear

that...I will say it again..)

And we know this because God saw fit to reveal this to us!
In His kindness, He has told us *why* He allows us to suffer!

And last week we noted just three texts that revealed to us “why” we suffer.

Romans 5:3

“...we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, **4** and endurance produces character, and character produces hope...”

Romans 8:28–29

“**28** And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good,^[h] for those who are called according to his purpose. **29** For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.”

1 Peter 1:6–7

“**6** In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, **7** so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

Other texts you may want to add to your notes is:

James 1:2–4

“**2** Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, **3** for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. **4** And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.”

Ecclesiastes 7:2–4

“It is better to go to the house of mourning
than to go to the house of feasting,
for this is the end of all mankind,
and the living will lay it to heart.

3 Sorrow is better than laughter,
for by sadness of face the heart is made glad.

4 The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning,
but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth.”

All these passages remind of different purposes God has in our suffering!

So, just a quick point of application, listen to me carefully, beloved, be **VERY CAREFUL** of asking, “God, why?”

Be very careful that you do not have a heart of contempt, so as to cross examine God’s will and purposes!

God has given you several reasons why He allows, permits, uses and commissions suffering!

What you must do is humble yourself and embrace what God has spoken!

You do not get to question what God had declared! He has *declared* suffering is necessary for your growth!

You do not get to have an opinion on what God has decided! He has decided to use suffering to conform you into the image of Christ!

Humble yourself!

Embrace His revealed will and walk with Him as He leads *into* valley, *through* valley and *out of* the valley!

Now that we have considered things, we must get back to the text of Psalm 23.

Because even though God revealed to us why we suffer and that those reasons should give us hope and joy in the midst of trials...

...David points to something altogether different that assists him in dealing with

being in the valley.

David points us to a profound reality that we must give careful attention to!
And that is, we must give careful attention to the stunning, marvelous,
overwhelming, awe inspiring, glorious and blessed reality of **God's presence with
us in the midst of suffering or being the valley of deep darkness!**

The reason this is significant is because when David enters the valley He *does not*
say, (read v. 4...)

...because "I am being conformed into the image of Christ." (although that would
have been true..)

"The Lord is producing in me endurance, character and hope..." (although that
would have been true..)

He doesn't even say, "I will fear no evil because I know that through suffering you
are increasing my faith..." (although that would have been true..)

No, He said, I will not fear because *you are with me!!*

You are with me!

So, point of application (let's get this out early:)

WHEN YOU ARE IN THE VALLEY OF DEEP DARKNESS YOU SHOULD
NOT FEAR **BECAUSE GOD IS WITH YOU!**

Now, here is why knowing who He is makes ALLLLL the difference in the world!

Because if you know who He is, then His presence with you is the most anchoring
truth your soul needs when you are in the valley!

But if you don't know who He is then His presence with you will be of little

consequence; you will be indifferent to His presence!

You must know God in order for His presence to be significant to you!
And could it be that we often flounder in the midst because we do not know Him as we ought!?

Could it be that hearts fail us in the midst of trials because we are quick to forget this soul anchoring truth: that God is with us!

YOU–MUST–KNOW–THIS–GOD!

AND IN KNOWING HIM, HIS PRESENCE WILL BE WHAT IT OUGHT TO BE YOU: **The most comforting reality in all the world!**

And in case you forgot, the God that is with you is the who

- cannot change,
- does not tire
- cannot lie

He is the God who:

- cannot fail
- has never made a mistake or had a bad day

He is the God who:

- speak and things appear
- speaks and the earth trembles
- has never made a promise that He has not kept!

He is the God who has the power to:

- parts seas
- calm storms
- stopped the mouths of lions
- raise the dead
- give sight to the blind

- heal the sick
- keep the universe in perfect balance

He is the God who:

- does not know defeat (in fact he cannot be defeated)
- does not flinch
- does not waver (He does not bend, He does not break!)
- has never known difficulty (there is nothing that is challenging to Him)

He is the God who:

- has never been afraid
- has never trembled
- has never been overwhelmed

In short, He is the God who fills all and all!

To Him belongs all authority, power, dominion, might, power, and strength!

And this God, is the God that is with you!

The glorious weight of this reality should remove all fear, all doubt, all panic, all anxiety and all concern!

No wonder David says he will fear no evil, because this God is with him!

And here's what you need to know (it may be obvious, but I do not want to assume this): ***The fullness of who He is is with you!***

By this I mean, the totality of God's being is with you at all times!

God does not send a representative to be with you nor is He with you in parts or pieces!

No, the fullness of who He is with you at all times!

This is important because it shows that God is not a distracted, disconnected or unrelated God!

He is for you and this is demonstrated by the fullness of His presence with you.

And it is little wonder, then, why people in scripture repeatedly made reference to the presence of God being special to them.

Psalm 16:11

You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

Psalm 21:6

For you make him most blessed forever;
you make him glad with the joy of your presence.

Psalm 51:11

Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me.

Psalm 73:23–24

I am continually with you;
you hold my right hand.

24

You guide me with your counsel,
and afterward you will receive me to glory.

Zephaniah 3:16–17

On that day it shall be said to Jerusalem:
“Fear not, O Zion;
let not your hands grow weak.

17

The LORD your God is in your midst,

a mighty one who will save;
he will rejoice over you with gladness;
he will quiet you by his love;
he will exult over you with loud singing.

And God is pleased to remind us of His presence among us!
He does this reassure of hearts...

We see this in many passages...

Genesis 26:24

And the LORD appeared to him the same night and said, "I am the God of Abraham your father. Fear not, for I am with you and will bless you..."

Joshua 1:9

Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go."

Joshua 3:7

The LORD said to Joshua, "Today I will begin to exalt you in the sight of all Israel, that they may know that, as I was with Moses, so I will be with you."

And the wonder of all wonders is that God reinforced His presence among us by sending His son...and what is one of the names by which this son is called:

IMMANUEL (which means "God is with us!")

Matthew 1:21

18 Now the birth of Jesus Christ [e] took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. **19** And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. **20** But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which

is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. **21** She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” **22** All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet:

23 “Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son,
and they shall call his name Immanuel” (which means, God with us).

And this reality of God’s presence is climaxed in the last chapter in the last book of the scripture, the Revelation!

And here is what we read (and please notice the word “with” preposition of presence in the text):

3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God [the immortal, infinite, incomprehensible God] is **with** man [the mortal, finite and comprehensible man]. He will dwell **with** them, and they will be his people,[**b**] and God himself will be **with** them as their God.”

Saints, if you do not hear anything from the message, here this:

GOD IS WITH YOU!!

I know that at times it may feel like He has abandoned you.

“ **3** And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place[**a**] of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people,[**b**] and God himself will be with them as their God.”

You may feel like He has forsaken you!

You feel like you have been forgotten, neglected, left behind...

But when has your feelings ever made you a good theologian! It hasn't!

If you ever feel like God has left you, you need to check your heart and not His!

If you ever feel like God has abandoned you, it is because you are blind to His

presence not because He is absent!

If you feel like God has abandoned you, repent, because your feeling is in reality calling God a liar!

Because what has He declared, **“I will never leave you nor forsake you.”**

What has he declared, **“Behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”**

Beloved, the Lord you God is with you!!

And for God to abandon you is for Him not to be God, for then He would be a liar!

So, you who are in the midst of the valley, know that your Shepherd is there with you!

Listen to these words by our older brother Moses to our other brothers and sister, in Israel!

These words was spoken to then to encourage and put steel in their faith:

I am using these words to, by the help of the Spirit, to put steel in your faith as you are in the valley:

Be strong and courageous. Do not fear or be in dread of [your valley], for it is the LORD your God who goes with you. He will not leave you or forsake you.”

7 Then Moses summoned Joshua and said to him in the sight of all Israel [imagine that God is saying this to you as you are in the valley,

“Be strong and courageous...8 It is the LORD who goes before you. He will be with you; he will not leave you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed.”

Let's pray!