

The Lord is My Shepherd, pt.3

We continue in our series examining Psalm 23, so if you have your copy...

And we have been doing so, by asking two questions:

1. “Who is God?”
2. “Who is God to me?”

By asking “Who is God?”

We are seeking to know how God has revealed himself in scripture.

- We are seeking to know what He is like.
- What are His attributes?
- What makes Him God?

Because in the text, David says that the “Lord” is His shepherd, so it is helpful for us to know who this Lord!

Failure to understand who God is, will result in a failure to worship, honor or obey Him properly.

By this I mean if you are ignorant of who this God is, then you have NO hope in entering into a deep and meaningful relationship.

There are untold millions of people who think that they worship God or think that they know Him, but have not the slightest clue about who He really is.

This is evident when you hear them speak of God and say things like, “My God would never... judge!”

Or “My God receives me just as I am and understands my heart.” (And by this they mean God is ok with their sin.)

What these kinds of statements reveal is that people who are ignorant of God, end up fashioning a “god” to fit their preferences!

But, not us.

We desire to be a people who truly know God!

A people who truly see God for who He is and embrace the revelation about Himself.

And then by asking “Who is God to me?”

We are really asking, “How does the revelation of who God is apply to me?”

Because if we are not careful, this question could sound like we are trying to craft a god after our imagination.

But instead of that, we are seeking to rightly apply the character and nature of God to us, as people made in His image.

And so in answering the first question, “Who is God?” we sought to look at scripture to get a better understanding of who He is.

So, to give us a thorough recap I will use a confession that I think summarizes what we have examined nicely. (And by the way, confessions can be a good tool to have good summary statements about doctrines. The paragraphs I am going to read come from the Second London Baptist Confession, which is a thoroughly reformed confession.)

1. The Lord our God is one, the only living and true God. He is self-existent and infinite in being and perfection. His essence cannot be understood by anyone but him. He is a perfectly pure spirit. He is invisible and has no body, parts, or changeable emotions. He alone has immortality, dwelling in light that no one can approach. He is unchangeable, transcends all space, eternal, incomprehensible, almighty, in every way infinite, absolutely holy, perfectly wise, wholly free,

completely absolute. He works all things according to the counsel of his own unchangeable and completely righteous will for his own glory. He is most loving, gracious, merciful, and patient. He overflows with goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin. He rewards those who seek him diligently. At the same time, he is perfectly just and terrifying in his judgments. He hates all sin and will certainly not clear the guilty.

God has all life, glory, goodness, and blessedness in and of himself; he alone is all-sufficient in himself. He does not need any creature he has made nor does he derive any glory from them. Instead, he demonstrates his own glory in them, by them, to them, and upon them. He alone is the source of all being, and everything is from him, through him, and to him. He has absolute sovereign rule over all creatures, to act through them, for them, or upon them as he pleases. In his sight everything is open and visible. His knowledge is infinite and infallible. It does not depend upon any creature, so for him nothing is contingent or uncertain. He is absolutely holy in all his plans, in all his works, and in all his commands. Angels and human beings owe to him all the worship, service, or obedience that creatures owe to the Creator and whatever else he is pleased to require of them.

Beloved, this is who God is!

AND AT THE MENTION OF THIS GOD, IT SHOULD BE NOTHING TO PROSTRATE OURSELVES BEFORE AT THE MERE MENTION OF HIS NAME!!!

And just as an aside,

I thought of thinking about God that I found to be helpful is by understanding that **God is not disposable or replaceable.**

Think about it, everything in creation is disposable and replaceable.

But this cannot be said of God!

God is the only being that literally has no substitute! All this to say, when it comes to God, it is right..we must have this lofty, elevated exalted view of God!

With God, you can never exaggerate His glory, goodness and greatness!

Transition: And what is one of the most remarkable things that we read about this transcendent, self-sufficient, all powerful, exalted, God a is *relational* God!

He is a God who draws near and has close and intimate fellowship with His creatures.

So, intimate and close is He to us, His people, He is known to us as our shepherd. (This is what David declares, v. 1, read)

And this is how we relate to the greatness and greatness of God, he is to us a shepherd. This is who God is to us!

Now, I would remind you that this is more than a theological statement of truth, but this must be a daily reality that governs the totality of lives.

That God is our daily shepherd, who we follow constantly and continually.

Because we dare not let God say of us, that we are a people who, “honors him with our lips, but our heart is far from Him.”

And we ended our time last week looking at the fact that we can only have true, lasting and abiding contentment when the Lord is our shepherd.

And just to write it again.

(IMPORTANT TRUTH):

Replacement Shepherds will always leave you dissatisfied and discontentment!
The only trustworthy Shepherd that will be the shepherd you need and long for is the Lord.

Transition: Now, let examine another aspect as we examine the Lord being our Shepherd.

And I want us to look at this under two headings

And that is the **1. The Shepherd's initiative** and **2. The Shepherd's**

care And will only look at the Shepherds Initiative this evening.

As we look at these two headings, it's important that we remember this metaphor of the Lord being our shepherd has both theological and practical ramifications.

The Shepherd's initiative is theological and His care for us is practical. There certainly is some overlap, but for the sake of trying to think it through, I think this will be helpful for us

1. The Shepherd's initiative

That is a Shepherd and we are His people is abundantly clear in scripture!

We see this most clearly in the Psalms.

Ps. 78:52, (where the Psalmist is retelling the work of God in the exodus) He says
“...he led out his people like sheep
and guided them in the wilderness like a flock.”

Ps 95:6–7

6 Oh come, let us worship and bow down;
let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker!

7 For he is our God,
and we are the people of his pasture,
and the sheep of his hand.

Ps. 100:3

Know that the Lord, he is God!

It is he who made us, and we are his
we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.

So, it is clear from these passages that God is a Shepherd to His people and that His people are His sheep.

But is it here that I want to take a moment to ask, “How does this become a reality?” Or “How is it that we become sheep in the flock of God?”

Now, of course, because you are expert theologians and are well instructed in the scriptures, you can readily answer this, but I do not want to assume this reality.

Because one thing that I have learned is that if you assume the fundamentals and essentials, it is not long until you ignore or dismiss the fundamentals and essentials.

So, one of the first things we must have clearly fixed in our mind and it is this:

If we are ever to say, “The Lord is my Shepherd”, it is because He has first acted to make us His sheep.

There has never been a single person born into the world belonging to the flock of God, they must be brought into the sheep fold.

James 1:18,

“ **18** *Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.*”

1 Peter 1:23,

“you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding *word of God...*”

1 John 4:19,

“We love because *he first loved us.*”

Titus 3:1-7

“**3** Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work, **2** to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people. **3** For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another. **4** But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, **5** *he saved us*, not because of works done

by us in righteousness, but *according to his own mercy*, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, 6 whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, 7 so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”

Eph 2:1–5,

2 And you were dead in the trespasses and sins 2 in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— 3 among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.^[a] 4 *But God*, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, 5 even when we were dead in our trespasses, *made us alive together with Christ*—by grace you have been saved—

vv. 8, 9

8 For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; *it is the gift of God*, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

Romans 3:22b–26

For there is no distinction: 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 and *are justified by his grace* as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, 25 *whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith*. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. 26 It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

Eph 1:3

3 Blessed be the *God and Father* of our Lord Jesus Christ, *who has blessed us in Christ* with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, 4 *even as he chose us in him* before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. *In love* 5

he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will,

And I could rattle off more references, but I think you get the point, God, who is the shepherd, is the one who grants us access into His sheepfold.

Jesus, in His declaration tells us how we enter the sheepfold and why it is that he is the good shepherd. (flip with me to John 10:7.)

So, Jesus indicates to us many important truths. And two of them I want to highlight.

1. He is the access point to enter the sheepfold (“I am the door.”)
2. And that His death is the means by which the salvation of the sheep is secure.

When Jesus declares that He is the door is saying that there are no other points of entry when it comes to entering the sheepfold.

This is very similar to what He says in John 14:6, where He says, ““I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”

The exclusivity that is revealed here should result in humility and praise.

Humility because God has seen fit to bring to Christ, the door that you may enter and be saved

Praise because God provided a door period!

Many stumble and fall over the fact the door is exclusive, without recognizing that miracle is the fact that there is a door!

Think of this: God would have been COMPLETELY, TOTALLY, ABSOLUTELY and COMPREHENSIVELY just if He allowed all of us to be abandoned to Hell forever!

The prophet Isaiah says, “All we like sheep have gone astray;
we have turned—every one—to his own way...”

And if the text ended by saying and we all died going our own way! That would be just!

But it is incomprehensible grace and unfathomable mercy that the text does not end that way!

Instead the text says, “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.”

What!? God would grant us access to Him! What!? God grants us access to Him by the death of His Son!

We ought to be a people most profoundly humble and a people of exuberant praise!

And it is very important to highlight the fact that Jesus, as the Shepherd, places great emphasis upon His death!

Three time He draws our attention to it. (v. 11, 15 and 17.)

This is crucial because it not only reveals the means by which the sheep will be saved, but it is a GREAT expression of His LOVE AND CARE for His sheep to provide what is necessary for our well-being and protection!

Remember, that although this Shepherd and Sheep motif is a metaphor, it nevertheless reveals incredible and powerful truths concerning who we are, but most importantly who our Shepherd is.

And if a Shepherd is anything, He is caring and protective of His sheep!

This is abundantly clear in the contrast that Jesus gives between Himself and the hired hands in v. 12 (notice it, read.)

The hired hand does not own the sheep, he does not care about the sheep and he does not know the sheep.

Jesus is the opposite of the hired hand, he owns, knows and cares for the sheep.

And this ownership, knowledge and care leads Him to action!

It leads Him to lay down His life for the sheep!

Where the hired hand scurries, Jesus, the good shepherd, sacrifices!

Where the hired hand leaves the sheep, Jesus, good shepherd, lays down His life for them!

This is the character of your shepherd, He is loving and protective.

And we get a glimpse of this from the life of David. And we see a glimpse into the life and character of a shepherd.

Contextually, this is when David is seeking to convince and compel Saul to allow him to fight Goliath.

Listen to how this unfolds...this gives us insight into the life of a shepherd.

I Samuel 17 32 And David said to Saul, "Let no man's heart fail because of him. Your servant will go and fight with this Philistine." **33** And Saul said to David, "You are not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him, for you are but a youth, and he has been a man of war from his youth." **34** But David said to Saul, "Your servant used to keep sheep for his father. And when there came a lion, or a bear, and took a lamb from the flock, **35** I went after him and struck him and delivered it out of his mouth. And if he arose against me, I caught him by his beard and struck him and killed him. **36** Your servant has struck down both lions and bears, and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be like one of them, for he has defied the armies of the living God." **37** And David said, "The Lord who delivered

me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine.”

Think of the determination!

Think of the persistence!

Think of the resolve!

Think of the care!

Think of the concern!

Think of the compassion!

Think of the LOVE!

David was willing to sacrifice His life to protect one of his lambs!

But the Lord Jesus, the Son of David, in order to rescue us from the mouth of sin, death and the grave, grabbed the cup of God’s wrath and drank it!

And here’s the thing:

David was delivered from the paw of the bear and lion!

David’s life was spared!

Jesus was not delivered!

Jesus was not spared!

He endured the wrath!

He endured the judgment!

ALL OF THIS BECAUSE OF LOVE!!!!

So, what I have been attempting to unfold from the word is the fact that in order to be a sheep in the flock of God, it required the Shepherd’s Initiative.

It must be the Shepherd proactively pursuing and caring for us!

And the preeminent way He has done this is by offering Himself as the means by which we would enter into His flock!.

If times allow:

Touch on eternal security.