

The Lord is My Shepherd, pt.4

This evening we continue in our series on the Lord being our Shepherd, from Ps. 23 (read.)

As we have considered this Psalm, we have been doing so under two questions:

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

The first question is important because it forces us to stop and consider who our Lord is.

David says that “the Lord” is His shepherd. So, it is right to consider who this Lord is.

And thankfully, we do not have to create or make up a god, He has revealed Himself!

He has made Himself known.

And as we explored the question of “who is God?”, we were overwhelmed by His GREATNESS.

If there is one that can be said about our Lord is that He is GREAT!

Just by way of reminder, we saw God’s greatness in that:

- That **He is the one and only true and living God** (that besides Him there is no other.)

All other so-called “gods” are make-believe gods.
They are imaginary “gods;” they are pretend gods.

They are gods, who are dumb and mute!
(Ps. 115:1–7)

Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to your name give glory, for the sake of your steadfast love and your faithfulness!

2 Why should the nations say, “Where is their God?”

3 Our God is in the heavens; he does all that he pleases.

4 Their idols are silver and gold, the work of human hands.

5 They have mouths, but do not speak; eyes, but do not see.

6 They have ears, but do not hear; noses, but do not smell.

7 They have hands, but do not feel; feet, but do not walk; and they do not make a sound in their throat.

Not our God, He is living and acting!

He is the God, who, in and of Himself has life!

This then makes Him both the giver and sustainer of life!

All creatures owe their existence to Him!

- We also saw His greatness in that **He is the one who has comprehensive, complete, total, unhindered, unadulterated power and sovereignty!**
 - He has unfilter authority and He wields that authority as the Sovereign Potentant.
 - He does *what* He pleases, *when* he pleases, *how* He pleases, *where* He pleases, with *whom* please simply because he pleases to!
 - There is none who can advise Him or say to Him “what are you doing?”
 - No one can alter His plans! Many try, but all end in failure.
 - His dominion is an everlasting dominion!
 - His rule and reign cannot be hindered or prevented!

- His power cannot be altered nor does it diminish!

This means that God has no needs, He needs no assistance, He does not need help, He does not need a vacay.

Now, as an aside, this kind of power would be scary if God was evil!

But because God is good and overflows with love, mercy and grace, His rule is one we can and should delight in.

But this is our Lord, the sovereign ruler.

- We also saw His greatness in that He is the transcendent God (that He exist in a realm and category outside of us!)
 - His being and essence is uncommon and unfamiliar to us!
 - His being and essence cannot be fully comprehended by us!
 - He is the God who is beyond us!
 - He is the God whose nature is unlike ours!
 - He is other!
 - He is holy (which means separate, distinct, set apart.)
 - He is the only being that is truly unique!
 - He is the only one who is not replaceable or disposable.

Now all this is important because of our second question, “Who is God to me?”

That is, how does this great, transcendent, holy, almighty God relate to and you I?

David tells us that He is to us a Shepherd.

Now, as we considered some of the implications of this, we did so under two heading:

1. The Shepherd’s initiative and 2. The Shepherd's

care Last time we only considered the *Shepherds*

Initiative.

And really what was was a look at the **doctrine of salvation.**

Or to borrow the metaphor from the text, we examined, “how do someone become a sheep in the flock of God?”

And the reason why looking at this was important was because being a sheep in the flock of God is not something that is seen as ordinary, inconsequential or normal.

No, being a sheep in the flock of God is something that is extraordinary, wondrous and supernatural!

To summarize this point we were reminded that someone becomes a sheep in the flock of God because God, according to the council of His own gracious and sovereign will, determined that He would elect, regenerate and redeem sinners, at the cost of Himself!

So, God determined both *who* would be sheep and *how* they would become sheep!

He chose the people and the means!

This should give us cause to praise and worship saying with the apostle, “**33** Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! **34** “For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?”**35** “Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid? **36** For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.

That’s *Shepherd’s Initiative.*

Now, this evening, we want to give consideration to the *Shepherd’s Care.*

As we consider this, you will notice that there is some overlap here.

As we talked about God's initiative in salvation, God also takes initiative in how He cares for us!

And I will point it out now, and we look at it in more detail a little later.

Notice His care, by His initiative,

He makes me lie down...

He leads me...

He restores...

He leads me...

So, His care is seen by His initiative.

Again, we will look at this more closely, but I wanted to just point that out to show there is some overlap between the two ideas of the Shepherd's Initiative and the Shepherd's Care.

As we look at the text, it is important to note and remember that this is an agricultural Psalm that draws upon an aspect of life very familiar to those living in the ancient near east.

And David chooses the occupation of Sheep herding as his metaphor for God.

David, as you know, was a sheep herder (or Shepherd), so the reality of what it means to be a Shepherd was pressing upon David as He writes!

He understands it and gets it; he knows what it means to be a shepherd!

So, as we walked through the text, we must consider the occupation of a Shepherd to help us understand the importance and feel the weight of what David is saying.

And the overarching point that you need to understand and settle in your heart in mind is this (and this should get you excited!):

"The entirety of your life and the care and health of your soul is intricately interwoven to your Shepherd" (2x)

Another way to say it is this: ***The extent to which you are cared for is dependent upon the character of your Shepherd.***

Simpler way to say it: good shepherd, good care!

And this is the significance of the statement: “I shall not want!”

Why? Because the care of my shepherd is so good, I have no wants!

Now, what David does is unfolds for us the reason why he has no lack!

We can consider the rest of the Psalm as an explanation of why David says, “I shall not want!”

It reveals just how good the Lord is as His shepherd.

Again, this is the **care of the Shepherd.**

This care is seen in several way:

1. The care of the shepherd is seen in the fact that He provides for them.

“He makes me lie down in green pasture”

This is a wonderful picture into the ***intentionality, thoughtfulness*** and the ***meticulous care*** of the Shepherd.

There are several things that make this true.

1. The first thing is that in order for sheep to eat they have to feel *protected*. Sheep, by nature, are very skittish and nervous animals and if they do not feel protected they will not eat!

So, what’s wonderful in David’s word of being made to lie down is the fact that he feels protected in the care of the shepherd (and we will more of this in v. 4), but the point here is that the protection leads to the ability to receive provision.

2. Notice it is *green* pastures to which David refers.

Green pastures communicate to us the lush and nutrient rich food that the sheep are able to eat!

Sheep, if left to themselves, would not only gaze the same land until it is barren, but they would also eat weeds and other grasses that are bad for them and could kill them!

So, what the Shepherd would do is lead the sheep to fresh grazing lands and he would make sure the land was suitable for eating!

He would make sure that the sheep would eat only the food that was the best for them!

Jesus says something similar when He is talking about the sheep that are in His care.

“**9** I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture.”

The going in and out and finding pasture reflects the care of the shepherd to provide that pasture for them and the freedom and comfort the sheep have in going in and out!

3. The Shepherd shows His care in that He leads us as His sheep! (v. 2, “He leads me..., v. 3, “He leads me...”

Depending on the translation you have, you may have,

“He leads me by still waters” or “He leads by waters of rest” or “He leads by quiet waters...”

The point is one that leads us to water peace. He leads us to the place where the waters are tranquil and refreshing.

These waters are not muddled or murky with contagions, disease or filth!

It is not litter with debris, waste and vileness.

It is clear, clean and still waters of rest of peace!

This speaks to the Shepherd's deliberate, conscious, purposeful care for his sheep.

Notice, He leads us...this is a **determined**, a **dedicated**...a **thoughtful, calculated** and deliberate leading with which He leads us!

He leads us to the still waters, but it also says He leads us in paths of righteousness.

These are the paths that are right, just, ethically and morally pure and true.

These are paths that pertain to godliness!

These are paths that have been paved by the Lord Himself, as He is the Lord of righteousness!

So, what the Lord does is leads us in just or you can say in being obedient to His righteous rules and commands!

And notice He does *for His namesake*.

He leads us on paths of righteousness to bring renown and fame to His name!

So, the Lord has determined to bring honor to His name by causing us to walk in true holiness and righteousness.

So, catch this, if we walk in paths of righteousness and that brings glory, honor and fame to God, guess what happens when we don't: We bring reproach, shame and disdain on the name of God!

We tarnish and kick mud upon the name of our Lord when we live in rebellion to the righteousness He calls us to walking!

In our day the value of a name means nothing.

And tragically many are not living with a sense of honoring and valuing the family name!

And by God's grace, I am seeking to restore that sense of honor in our family. I often ask my boys, "What's your last name?"

What am I doing by asking them that? I seeking to show them that there value attached to a name.

And in like fashion, as sheeps of the living God, we bear His name!

We ought to take care, then, of how we represent God in the world!

So, a question of application, while we are here: How are you representing the name of the Lord?

Are you walking in those paths of righteousness?

Lastly,

We will cover this last section: v. 3, "He restores my soul."

This is a beautiful picture of the shepherd looking at His sheep and tenderly and gently nursing their wounds, scraps and scratches.

This is a picture of the Shepherd restoring His lamb back to health!

This requires the Shepherd to have a vast knowledge of what can happen and the ability to deal with whatever does happen.

He is able to discern what is necessary for His sheep and is faithful to tend to His sheep restoring it to good and proper health!

But notice, He says...

“He restores my **soul**”

This indicates to us that our Shepherd who does He shepherds the innermost parts!

He cares for and attends to our soul!

- He puts the balm of peace upon the weary soul!
- He restores the soul that has been impacted by the devastating consequences of our sin.
- He mends and tends the bones that have been broken by sin!

This is why Jesus as the good shepherd can say, “**28** Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. **29** Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. **30** For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

As we close:

Consider the care of your Shepherd!

Be reminded of how He cares for you both physically and spiritually!

He is the Shepherd who makes you lie down in green pastures and He is the one who restores your soul!

Consider the care of your Shepherd!

How, though He has an untold number of sheep, He knows you intimately and cares for you personally!

Consider the care of your Shepherd!

And be reminded of the great and grand privilege it is to be in flock and in the care of this Shepherd!

Let's pray!