

The Lord is My Shepherd, pt.5

This evening we will continue in our series looking at Psalm 23 (turn there...)

As we have come to this Psalm, we have big picture questions that we have been asking and that is “Who is God?” and “Who is God to Me?”

The first question is aimed at helping us to see the greatness and goodness of God, in terms of His *character*, His *being*, His *nature*, His *personality*, His *attributes*...

And as we searched, we found that God is the sovereign ruler, who has comprehensive, total, complete, unbridled and unparalleled authority.

God is not just powerful and has authority, but He is power and authority. That is to say, the only reason we know of power or authority, is because it originates with Him!

- ❖ This God is transcendent.
- ❖ He is exalted beyond the heavens!
- ❖ He dwells in unapproachable light!
- ❖ He is limitless! There are no boundaries with God!
- ❖ You cannot contain Him!
- ❖ You cannot apprehend Him!
- ❖ He is beyond constraint!
- ❖ He is the God who is not dependent on anyone or anything!
- ❖ He is life! And has life in and of Himself!

- ❖ He is the God, who determines the end from the beginning!
- ❖ No one stays His hand, no one can hold Him back! No one can say to Him, “What have you done?”
- ❖ He is everywhere!
- ❖ He has all knowledge and understanding!
- ❖ He is perfectly wise!
- ❖ He is terrifyingly just!
- ❖ He is the God of wrath!
- ❖ Yet, He is the God of grace and mercy!
- ❖ He has no counselor or advisors! He is the counsel
- ❖ He has no board of directors! He is the director!
- ❖ He owns all things and everything owes its existence to Him!
- ❖ He has no rivals! Because rivals assume there is someone or something that compares to Him!
- ❖ With Him there is no competition!
- ❖ He is incomprehensible!
- ❖ He is invincible!
- ❖ He is thrice Holy!
- ❖ So, holy, that Angel dare not speak a peek!
- ❖ He is the God before whom angels bow!
- ❖ He is the God who does not grow weary or tired!

❖ He simply is God!

This is what we found!

And take a sec to consider the fact that this God has condescended and made Himself known!

But not only that, He determined, according to the counsel of His own will, to enter into a covenant relationship with the likes of you!

He has come time and, through the Spirit, made His habitation among us!

One of the greatest statements in all of scripture is in Revelation 21:3, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God.”

And this answers the question of, “Who is God to me?”

This God is a relational God, who has made us His people!

And to use the language of our text, He is to us “Our Shepherd.”

He has determined that He will dwell with us! He is among us! He is to you a shepherd! (v. 1.)

He does not mind Himself involving Himself with His sheep.

He is a shepherd who is with us! (We are going to look at this more in a second.)

As we considered this: We looked at the Shepherd’s Care.

And here we were considering how it is that our Shepherd relates to us.

How does He care for us!

And what David does in this Psalm is tell how the Shepherd cares for His sheep!

- We saw that God cares for us by **providing for us!** “He makes us lie down...”

Here we noted His *intentionality, thoughtfulness* and his *meticulous care*.

- We saw God cares for us by **leading us...**
 - He leads us to restful waters of peace
 - He leads us in the paths of righteousness (He leads us to live righteously...a Holy Shepherd will have His sheep be holy!)
- We also saw that God cares for us by **restoring us...**
 - He tends to His battered and bruised sheep; to those who are broken hearted.
 - He nurses them the balm of peace and He comforts them with the ointment of His presence.
 - He tends and mends our souls!
 - Our Shepherd is **determined, dedicated, conscientious, calculated, gracious, compassionate and loving!**

Now, we turn our attention to verse 4. (We will see how it goes, but this may very well turn into a series in a series.)

Because as we look at v. 4, we enter into the realm of the Christian life that is fraught with **fear, confusion, misunderstanding, dread** and really **faithlessness...**

And that is dealing with the valley of the shadow of death (or dealing with, as one translation renders it, valleys of deep dark)!

To make it plain in verse 4 we turn to **suffering!** We turn to grappling with seasons of deep darkest.

Have you been there? To the valley of deep darkness; not darkness, but DEEP darkness!

Have you been there? To the valley, where death's shadow seems to close in on you!

Have you been there? To the valley where pain and misery are regular travelers.

Have you been there?

Well, David was there.

And he writes about it.

And what He writes and what God revealed through him, is fundamental to you being able to deal with those trips to the valley!

The truths contained here will keep you from losing your mind and living as though the Shepherd has abandoned you.

As we consider this there are a couple of introductory insights that must be firmly written on the tablets of our hearts.

And some of the things I am about to say maybe shocking, so fasten your seat belt...keep your hands and feet inside this theological ride at all times!

The first insight that we need to consider is this:

- 1. God is absolutely, totally, completely and unashamedly sovereign of ALL human suffering. (2x)**

There is no such thing as suffering outside of God's sovereignty!

Here me: **Your suffering comes as a result of God sovereignly ordaining and fully His purposes in and through your suffering. (2x)**

In other words, you go through seasons of suffering *because* God ordains for you to!

What does scripture say, Psalm 115:3

"Our God is in the heavens and He does all that He pleases."

Either He does ALL that He pleases or He does not!

Either He is sovereign over suffering or He is not!

So, here is a very provocative statement that will throw you for a loop: **God is pleased by your suffering! (2x)**

Listen carefully: God is pleased when you suffer, NOT in some sick, twisted, masochistic way; where He receives joy from your pain!

Rather, He is pleased insofar as He accomplishes His good and perfect will *through* your suffering.

Does that make sense?

God is pleased to use suffering as a means to accomplish His purposes!

God is not afraid to reveal this reality to us in scripture. He does not conceal this from us!

Think of all the examples of suffering in scripture where God is seen as the one who permits it:

Think of Joseph. Betrayed by his brothers, sold into slavery, taken to a foreign land, accused of rape, thrown in prison!

What does he say, "What you meant for evil, God meant for good."

Many times we focus on the fact that God used Joseph's suffering to accomplish good, while missing the fact that God actually commissioned or permitted the suffering in the first place!

Think of Job. A very wealthy man, who loses his riches, whose health plummets, who has friends with poor Theology that adds to the sorrow by accusing him of sin, and whose children are killed by having a house collapse on top of them.

And why does this happen?

Because God commissioned it!

Listen to this: Job 1:6–12

“**6** Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan[b] also came among them. **7** The LORD said to Satan, “From where have you come?” Satan answered the LORD and said, “From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking up and down on it.” **8** And the LORD said to Satan, “Have you considered my servant Job, [**God brings us Job's name. It's almost as if Satan missed Job and God says, “Oh you forgot one!”**] that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil?” **9** Then Satan answered the LORD and said, “Does Job fear God for no reason? **10** Have you not put a hedge around him and his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. **11** But stretch out your hand and touch all that he has, and he will curse you to your face.” **12** And the LORD said to Satan, “Behold, all that he has is in your hand. Only against him do not stretch out your hand.” So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD.”

Listen, Job suffered because God commissioned it!

Think of the nation Israel, a nation formed and created by the very promise of God. They spent 430 in slavery. They suffer under the tyrannical leadership of Pharaoh.

Why?

Well, I want you to see why!

Genesis 15:12

12 As the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell on Abram. And behold, dreadful and great darkness fell upon him. **13** Then the LORD said to Abram [who said to Abram], “Know for certain that your offspring will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs and will be servants there, and they will be afflicted for four hundred years. **14** But I will bring judgment on the nation that they serve, and afterward they shall come out with great possessions.”

Question: If God will deliver them from their affliction, guess who sent them to that affliction?

And I would remind you that this is a prophecy!

God declares that this will happen WAAAAAAAYYYYY before the nation of Israel is formed!

How can God speak about their captivity, bondage and affliction if He was not the one who ordained it?

This family, God is not shy about His allowing or permitting or ordaining suffering to accomplish His purposes.

Think of the Lord Jesus, who suffered unimaginably! Being mocked, ridiculed, beaten beyond human recognition and murdered by execution (and His execution included enduring the wrath of God!)

And what are we told about His suffering, Isaiah 53:10, “Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief;”

Another translation says,

“the LORD desired
To crush Him, causing *Him* grief;”

Did you was the will of the Lord to crush Him."

And Jesus repeatedly makes this clear, He says, "I have come not to do my own will, but the will of Him who, sent me!"

And we have to conclude that it was the Father's will for Jesus to suffer!

Let's bring this point to bear your life.

James 1:12 says, “**12** Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him...”

Question, who is the one doing the testing? God is doing the testing!

But you say, “God does not test His people!”

Well, listen to this:

Concerning Abraham sacrificing Isaac, the scripture says in Gen 22, “God tested Abraham...”

Do you remember God turned the water sweet when Moses threw a log into it?

Immediately following that the text says, “There the LORD made for them a statute and a rule, and there he tested them... (Exodus 15:25)

Deut. 8: 11 “Take care lest you forget the LORD your God...” **15** who led you through the great and terrifying wilderness, with its fiery serpents and scorpions and thirsty ground where there was no water, who brought you water out of the flinty rock, **16** who fed you in the wilderness with manna that your fathers did not know, that he might humble you **and test you**, to do you good in the end.”

God tests his people and suffering is the test He will sometimes use!

So, here is the conclusion we make: there is nothing that enters into your life that had not first come from the hand of God! (2x)

Your God, who works all things according to his righteous will, allows, permits, commissions your suffering.

There is no hardship, challenge, difficulty, pain, hurt, grief, sorrow or suffering that has not been hand delivered to you by your God, your Father and Shepherd!

So, with this in mind, I asked a question last week in anticipation of this.

I ask, "How did David enter this valley?"

Did David, wander like a lost sheep, and lead himself here?

Or was he lead there by the good shepherd?

You know the answer! He was led there!

And we know because David says that, "God was with him in the valley."

The good shepherd led him there!

The same shepherd who leads you to still waters and on paths of righteousness is the same shepherd who leads you to the valley!

Now, I know what you could be thinking:

You are saying, "Well, it could be the case that David wandered from God and God went to rescue him and God was present because He was delivering David!"

To which, I respond: Yes, there are times when our sin leads us into seasons of deep difficulty, but that does not mean that God is not there with us and is not in control of it situation!

That is the problem with sinning, we sin in the very presence of God!

Now, let me say this for free, of course, God is never responsible for our sin! But that means that God hangs up his sovereignty as suffer earthly consequences of your sin.

He is sovereign of that too!

Family, hear me when I say this:

You want God to be sovereign of your suffering!

You want God sovereign over your suffering because, if God is sovereign over your suffering, He is the one and only one who can deliver you from it!

His sovereignty over your suffering is what can give you hope of it ending...either in this life or the one to come!

To say it negatively: If God is **not** sovereign over your suffering, then you ABSOLUTELY no hope!

Because there would be something outside of God that He could not manage!

And you know better than to even think such a thought!

He is absolutely, positively sovereign over your suffering!

Which means several things as we close:

1. **God is trustworthy and faithful!!** You can trust Him in the midst of your suffering because He is sovereign over it! You must look to him

2. **That your suffering has a purpose** (it is not without meaning, and we may have to look at the purposes that God gives for our suffering next!)

We will end here, but let's end with a reminder of this thought:

There is nothing that enters into your life that had not first come from the hand of God, who is your Shepherd!

There is no valley that you enter that your loving shepherd has led you! And because He is good. You can trust Him in the valley!

Let's pray!