

## The Lord is My Shepherd, pt.9

This evening we continue in the examination of Psalm 23.

The Lord has been pleased to reveal deep truth and allow us to behold wonderful things in His word

And I trust that He will continue to do the same this evening!

As we have approached this Psalm we have done so under two questions:

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

Last week, I mentioned that these questions are fundamental to all of life and we must get them right.

And it is true.

I would add that if these questions are fundamental to all of life, they are especially fundamental to ask in the midst of your trial.

I have found that we often endure trials without asking the right questions!

We often ask, “Why me, Lord?” “How come, Lord?” “How long, Lord?”

But in the midst of a storm, when you are in a trial, the questions you need to have answered is **“Who is God?”** and **“Who is God to me?”**

At every phase of the trial you need to be asking and answering these questions!  
(When you ENTER...IN THE MIDDLE...AND AT THE END!!)

And the reason why is because these questions help to **recalibrate** or **realign** your heart and mind in the midst of the trial.

When a trial comes, it comes with heavy rains and winds that blow across the boat of your life and can be very disorienting...

Your vision can become blurry and you sometimes feel like you are lost at sea!

**However, these questions are your lighthouse in the midst of the storm!**

These questions are what gives directions to your thoughts and affections when you are in a trial!

They help to **reorient** you!

And here's the insight, the Lord gave me, that you need to catch: ***the better you are able to answer these questions, the brighter the lighthouse will be!***

The problem with many is that they have dim lighthouses because they are unable to answer these questions with deep conviction!

The storm comes and they have little to no light! And therefore they have little to no direction!

**The more we press into this study, the more I am becoming aware of how absolutely crucial these questions are!**

*HEAR ME, PLEASE: The health and well-being of your soul depends on how well you are able to answer these questions!!*

So, by the grace of almighty God, do your due diligence to be able to answer these questions with absolute conviction!

By way of review, when we ask the question of, "who is God?"

When we ask this question, we are seeking to understand what God is like; what is His character and nature.

And God has been pleased to reveal himself as the covenant making and keeping God.

As the God who is in every way *superior* and *transcendent* to His creation, yet He delights in dwelling with us!

He is the God, who was, who is and is to come!

God is and was before time, He is in time and He is God into eternity.

God cannot be dethroned

- Impeached
- Overruled or
- Revoked

His decrees cannot be overturned

- They cannot be made void
- No one can negotiate terms with Him!

He is the God whose love is abundant, deep, overwhelming, consistent, constant and eternal!

He is not a temperamental God, whose emotions fluctuate based on circumstances!

He owns cattle on a thousand hills **AND** He owns the hills.

There is no one who can give God wise counsel!

There is no one that can give to God and His say, “Thanks! I needed that!”

God is never a debtor; He has never had to repay anyone or owe anyone anything!

***To Him belongs the entirety of everything!***

There is nothing to which God looks and says, “I wish I had that!” or “I wish I could do that!”

To God, all the waters of the world are but a tear!

To Him, the highest mountain is but a grain of sand.

To Him, a category 5 Hurricane is but a gentle breeze.

There is nothing above or beyond Him!

**Everything** is beneath Him!

This is who God is.

He is the transcendent, lofty, all-authoritative God, in whom there are no shadows or variations.

This is God! You need to know with deep conviction!

*But, “Who is this God to me?”*

And here, again, we are asking: “How does this God relate to us?”

And the fact that we can ask this question is profound, because it tells us that God is relational!

He is not a distant, detached, uninvolved God.

Instead, He delights in having a relationship with His creation!

And this is one of the things that the crucifixion and resurrection of the Lord tells us.

It tells us that God desires and delights in having a relationship with His creatures.

1 Corinthians 5:18, "...God...through Christ reconciled us to himself..."

God, then, to us is a Savior and in being our Savior, He becomes our everything!

For there is no greater need that we had than to be saved from His wrath and He has provided that salvation.

And in providing that salvation He became our everything!

So, He is to us our **Savior, Redeemer, Lord, God, Father...and according to Psalm 23, He is our Shepherd.**

And as our Shepherd, He cares for us!

And before we get into how He cares for us, let the fact that He cares wash over you!

The fact that God cares is awesome reality (in the fullest sense of the word **AWESOME!!**)

So impressed with this reality, the Psalmist David says in Psalm 8:4, "what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him?"

Or Psalm 144:3 David says, "O LORD, what is man that you regard him, or the son of man that you think of him?"

And the answer to the question is nothing!! Man is nothing! Man is literally dirt!

There is nothing in you that would cause God to regard you...

The reason we know this is because there are many who God does not regard!

There are some in your family, raised in the same house that God does not regard!

So, let us be ever mindful and never take for granted that this God cares for you or regards you!

Your Shepherd Cares for you!

Now, in the Psalm 23, there are several ways that God demonstrates His Shepherding care:

- 1. He Provides/Protects (vv. 1–2a)**
- 2. He Leads/Restores (vv. 2b–3)**
- 3. He is ever present with us (v. 4)**

And it is in v. 4, where David says (read) that the Lord has led us into a mini-series in examining and understanding God’s teaching on suffering!

And it is important to emphasize that this is **God’s teaching** us on what we need to know about suffering and how to suffer unto His glory!

As we continue in this study, it is important to note (and remember) that whatever God requires of us, He equipped us with!

He is not a God who requires you to be make bricks without straw, like Pharoah!

Instead, whatever He requires, He supplies!

2 Peter 1:3 proves this, when Peter, by the Spirit, says, “His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness...”

“ALL THINGS...” includes suffering.

What this means, catch this: ***God has equipped us with everything necessary to suffer well; to suffer in a way that brings Him glory!***

In other words, God has not withheld anything necessary to suffer well!

You do not suffer without the necessary tools to suffer!

If He requires suffering, then He equips you for it!

Now, there were two soul anchoring truths that has undergirded this teaching on suffering and they were:

1. **God is sovereign over all suffering!**
2. **God uses our suffering to accomplish His good purposes in us!**

I will not expound upon these truths, but I will say when we hear: **“God is sovereign over suffering”** we should hear that suffering is **not random, but ordained!**

And when we hear that **“God uses our suffering to accomplish His good purposes in us”** we should hear that suffering is **not needless, but necessary!**

Last week, the Lord revealed some truths that if properly understood changes the game not only on how we **understand** suffering, but on how we **actually** suffer. What we must come to grips with is the fact that God’s plan for us includes suffering!

God is so pleased to use suffering that Jesus, the Holy Son of God, endured suffering.

We read this in Hebrews 5:8, **Hebrews 5:8**, which says, when speaking of Jesus: **“8 Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered.”**

And what does it mean that Jesus “learned” obedience?

Well, the word itself means to “to learn by practice or experience; to acquire a custom or habit.”

It means that Jesus learned obedience by having to experience it materially.

What was the means by which He learned it?

SUFFERING!!!

Think of this, out of *ALL* the ways/means God could have used to teach obedience, He determined it would be **best** to use *suffering*!

Further think: If suffering was a *sufficient* means to instruct the Lord Jesus, then why would it be *insufficient* for you! (2x)

If suffering was *sufficient* to Him, who knew no sin, then why would it be *insufficient* for you, who know sin!?

Why would God choose something different for you when He did not spare Jesus?

In this revelation of Jesus learning obedience through suffering, He then becomes an example of how to suffer (and Peter tells us this when He says, “Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps.”)

With all this in mind God taught us that: And what the Lord gave us was this:

**He is so committed to using suffering as a means of growth for us that only one who did not need to suffer suffered, so that through His suffering we would learn how to suffer.**

**He is so committed to using suffering that He sent Jesus to be the perfect sufferer to teach us how to suffer!**

Since this is the case, I think it would be wise and extremely helpful to examine how Jesus suffered.

Now, outside of the cross, what do you think is the greatest experience of suffering the Lord Jesus underwent?

The Garden of Gethsemane (now, of course, Jesus endured other forms of suffering, but this moment in Jesus’ life is the most graphic and descriptive moment in His suffering, outside of the cross.)



Turn with me to Matthew 26:36–46. There are some incredible insights the Lord would have us to see and understand.

(I will read the passage and then we will examine it.)

### **Insight #1: Honest Assessment of Emotional State (v. 38)**

As Jesus considers the condition of His emotional state, He says that He is sorrowful!

(Think of the weight of the sorrow He was feeling... so great was His sorrow, that He could have died from what He was feeling... He said, “I am sorrowful even to death! He has a deathly sorrow!

Luke tells us that He was in so much agony that not only was he profusely sweating, but that His sweat was bloody. Which is what will happen if you are under severe stress. When you sweat under great stress blood vessels in the brain can burst and come through your pores! And this was Jesus!)

And what we see is that He acknowledges the emotions He is feeling!

What we need to gather from this is that it is not sinful or an expression of faithlessness to acknowledge how you feel!

Some people would lead you to think that to acknowledge sorrow or grief is to displease God!

This is far from the truth!

We know that’s not true for no other reason than the Lord Jesus is expressing HIS SORROW!

If it was sinful or even faithless to express your emotions then Jesus would be guilty of sin!

God, the creator of all things, included our emotions of sorrow, allows us to express those emotions!  
(Think about it: How else can we cast our cares on Him without expressing our emotions?)

You are not helped by containing or suppressing your emotions...

God would have you to express your emotion; and there is nothing wrong with having an accurate and honest assessment of your feelings.

**Insight #1: Give an Honest Assessment of Your Emotional State (v. 38)**

**Insight #2: Recruit Brothers and Sisters to Pray for and with You (v. 38)**

Notice that Jesus calls His closest companions (Peter, James and John) to be with Him and to pray with Him.

What this helps us to see is that we need to suffer in community (or if you like, we need to suffer in the fellowship of other saints!)

Just as God has not called us to suppress our emotions, He has not called us to suffer in isolation!

The one who suffers in isolation adds to the sorrow they face!

This principle is seen throughout scripture, but the clearest passage is Gal 6:2. "Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ."

**This tells us that suffering is a community project!**

Yes, God uniquely appoints trials for each of us, but those trials are never meant to be suffered alone!

Burdens are easier to carry when the weight of it is distributed!

**Side Note:** There are times to withdraw and be alone with the Father, the same way that Jesus did.

However, I would quickly add two points:

1. We never see Jesus withdraw during suffering, we see Him withdrawing in the midst of ministry pressure (which, in a way, could be a trial.)
2. **But here's the biggie:** The fact that Jesus withdrew proves that Him was meaningfully connected to people; that He was part of a group of people who cared for Him!

So, if you are to withdraw, do so with every intention of rejoining the group!

But, the insight we see is the in the midst of suffering we need to **Recruit Brothers and Sisters to Pray for and with You**

REMEMBER WHAT WE ARE EXAMINING: We are looking at the example of how Christ suffering to instruct us on how we are to suffer.

**We have already seen:**

**Insight #1: You Must Give an Honest Assessment of Your Emotional State (v. 38)**

**Insight #2: You Must Recruit Brothers and Sisters to Pray for and with You (v. 38)**

**Insight #3: You must Direct your Suffering to God (v. 39)**

Suffering is never neutral.

Either you suffer in drive or you suffer in reverse.

Either you direct your suffering toward God or you retreat into further despair and misery.

Either you suffer drawing near to God or you suffer with your back toward Him!

And the Lord models for us how to suffer with a sorrowful heart lifted up to God!  
He directed His sorrow to the Father!

How did He do this, He prayed (v. 36, read, v. 39, read)

Before we even get into the content of His prayer, we must note that He prayed!!

He is exemplifying what we see in Hebrews 4:16,  
“Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”

He drew near to God!

He did not allow His suffering to repel Him from God, but instead to compel Him to God!

The problem many of us face is that when we face trials we immediately seek solutions instead of God!

We try to find comfort, instead of communion!

But what Jesus shows us is that there is comfort by communion through prayer!

He took His sorrows to God!

We will develop the following thought more when we do our series on anxiety.

But, the comfort we get from God when we pray has nothing to do with receiving an affirmative answer to our prayers...the comfort is found in the fact that we prayed!!

Because if our comfort comes from what we receive, then our comfort comes from the gifts that God's give and not that we have God himself!

Prayer is comforting, because in it, we are casting our cares on the one who has no lack or limitations!

The one who has all power, might and authority!

And it here is that insight #2 is expanded!

Because even though it is good and right to have brothers and sisters shoulder the burden with you, it is not a replacement for going to God!

Brothers and Sister can be present, but they cannot be more present with you than God is!

Brothers and Sisters can be helpful, but they cannot be more helpful than God is!

Brother and Sister can comfort you, but they cannot comfort you more than God can!

**We can say it this way:**

Brothers and Sisters are called to have a place in your life, not to replace God in your life!

You have to, you must, it is imperative that you go to God!

You must direct your suffering to God!

We will end here for tonight!

Just to recap:

The Lord Jesus serves as the supreme example of how to suffer well!

And when we observe how He suffered, we gather a few insights:

**Insight #1: You must Give an Honest Assessment of Your Emotional State (v. 38)**

**Insight #2: You Must Recruit Brothers and Sisters to Pray for and with You (v. 38)**

**Insight #3: You must Direct your Suffering to God (v. 39)**