

The Lord is My Shepherd, pt.16

If you have your copy of God's word turn with me to Psalm 23....

This evening we return to Psalm 23. You might have forgotten the fact that we were in Psalm 23 when I started teaching on Wednesday Nights.

As we walked through this Psalm, the Lord was pleased to have us to give great consideration to the reality of suffering. We find this in v. 4

(Just as a quick encouragement; Go back to and pour over those notes! Because what the Lord revealed in that series was absolutely transformative! Coming out of that series, I am a changed man! Avail yourself to those notes! And just when you think you have mastered it, that is when you REALLY need to study it!)

Now, you may recall that there were two foundational and fundamental questions that guided us through this Psalm.

They were:

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

I would remind you that these questions ARE the basis for all of life!

By this, I mean, it is impossible to live a full and wholesome Christian life apart from answering these questions.

These questions are unavoidable and are essential for us to have answered accurately.

Failure to accurately answer these questions will lead you to the ditches of despair, hopelessness, and confusion.

The first question: “Who is God?”, is a question that deals with God’s ontology. Ontology is a fancy word that deals with the nature of someone or something.

When it comes to God, it answers the question: “What is God like?”, “What is His nature?”

As we survey the text of scripture, we find that God is the one, true, living God, who has all authority, power and might!

And one of the many ways this is drawn to our attention is by the fact that **God is the maker of heaven and earth!**

This fact is often repeated!

For example:

Deuteronomy 10:14 Behold, to the LORD your God belong heaven and the heaven of heavens, the earth with all that is in it.

2 Kings 19:15, “

And Hezekiah prayed before the LORD and said: “O LORD, the God of Israel, enthroned above the cherubim, you are the God, you alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; you have made heaven and earth.

1 Chronicles 29:11, Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is yours. Yours is the kingdom, O LORD, and you are exalted as head above all.

2 Chronicles 2:12, “Hiram also said, “Blessed be the LORD God of Israel, who made heaven and earth, who has given King David a wise son, who has discretion and understanding, who will build a temple for the LORD and a royal palace for himself.

Ezra 5:11, when the people of God was being confronted about rebuilding the temple, they said, “**11** And this was their reply to us: ‘We are the servants of the God of heaven and earth, ‘

Nehemiah 9:6, here is what we read, “**6** [a] “You are the LORD, you alone. You have made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them; and you preserve all of them; and the host of heaven worships you.

Isaiah 51:13, the LORD, your Maker, who stretched out the heavens and laid the foundations of the earth

Psalm 89:11 “The heavens are yours; the earth also is yours; the world and all that is in it, you have founded them.”

Psalm 102:25, “

Of old you laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands.”

Psalm 115:15, “May you be blessed by the LORD, who made heaven and earth!”

Psalm 121:1,2, “I lift up my eyes to the hills.

From where does my help come?

My help comes from the LORD,
who made heaven and earth. “

Psalm 146:5,6 “Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob,
whose hope is in the LORD his God,**6** who made heaven and earth,
the sea, and all that is in them,”

Revelation 14:7, “

And he said with a loud voice, “Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come, and worship him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the springs of water.”

And we could easily keep going, but the point is this:

God is the all-authoritative, powerful and great God!

We know this *because* He is the maker of heaven and earth! (And I have to make this application: If God made the heaven and earth, what makes you ever doubt that He can deliver you from whatever you may face!)

Now, if we were to take God being the creator of heaven and earth further, we can see that in addition to Him being powerful, He is also wise, compassionate and faithful!

How would we conclude this?

We conclude this based on the intricate and specific design of the earth!

God created a world that is fit for us!

The world is designed to yield food for us!

When it is too hot, we can shelter under the shade of a tree!

When it is too cold, we could gather wood to make a fire!

The regular cycle of the earth provides regular cycles for us that are necessary and essential!

Like the Sun for day (in order to work) the Moon and darkness for night (in order to sleep)!

These things and more reveal the character and nature of God!

And the text makes this clear is Roman 1:19, 20,

“19 For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. **20** For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world,[g] in the things that have been made. “

The point is this: When we ask the question, “Who is God?” **One answer that God gives us is that He is the great and wise God whose greatness and wisdom is clearly seen in the world that He made!**

That’s who God is!

Now, the second question, “Who is God to Me?”, seeks to answer “how does the character and nature of God relate to me?”

It answers the question, “what is the relationship between who God is, as creator and me, the created?”

And what David makes clear in the text is that God is to us a Shepherd! (v. 1)

He relates to us as a Shepherd and we are His sheep.

The immediate reality that this relationship communicates to us is that God is close and near to us!

He is one that cares and has regard for us! That we are fully known and loved by Him!

And to make sure that we do not miss this, David underscores what he means by telling us that the Lord is our shepherd!

He means most supremely that God is our caretaker!

That our life is kept, cared for and secured because of our shepherd.

This revealed to us that who your shepherd is matters!!

The whole of this wonderful Psalm is based on the character and nature of the shepherd!

David's great boast is inextricably tied to who the Lord is!!

David then tells us something about the character of the Shepherd, namely that the Shepherd cares.

He cares in several ways. One of which is:

1. He cares by taking initiative:

He makes me lie down... (v. 2)

He leads me... (v. 2)

He restores... (v. 3)

He leads me... (v. 3)

What this means is that God, who is our Shepherd, is one who is *intentional* and *thoughtful* in His leading of us!

He is deliberate and calculated!

He does not lead us randomly, haphazardly or without reason!

His initiative reveals that He is a dedicated **Shepherd**...which is another way to say that He is committed to us!

Another way our Shepherd cares is that He provides for us! (We see this in vv. 1, 2. He provides green pastures and still water...)

All of this leads us to v. 4, where we see our Shepherd's care for us by Him being present with us! (v. 4, read))

What gave David staying power (and what will give you staying power) in the valley of deep darkness is the fact that the Lord, your Shepherd is with you!!

- His presence is your power!
- His presence is your strength
- His presence is your comfort!
- His presence is your sanity!

The fact that God is with you ought to give you the endurance necessary to endure the valley!

Please notice that David does not look to himself for relief!

He does not say, “Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil [because I have been in valleys before!”]

He does not say, ““Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil]because I am strong or I have resources or I know Pastor, or I have a cousin...”]

No...

He says, plainly and powerfully, “I will not fear because you are with me!”

The presence of the Lord is your strength and hope in the valley.

David continues, though, by drawing attention to what we can call the “tools of the Shepherd.” (v. 4, read)

The rod and staff of the shepherd were necessary tools.

- The rod and staff were needed to protect the sheep and give them guidance!

The rod was to protect from and ward off predators, the staff was to keep the sheep moving along the desired path or even to rescue them from a ditch!

So,

- The rod was for protection!
- The staff was for guidance!

- The rod was for defense!
- The staff was for discipline!

- The rod was for guarding!
- The staff was security!

- The rod kills!
- The staff restores!

And our shepherd is one who knows how to use each tool with precision and wisdom!

Our Lord is a fierce defender and protector of us!! His rod protects us!

Our Lord is a loving guide and rescuer!! His staff keeps us!

And this, like it did David, should provide for us comfort [which is another way to say God’s rod and staff ought to give us rest of mind and peace in the soul!]

One commentator says, “Together, the rod and staff paint a picture of the [divine Shepherd](#) who wields them. He is strong, competent, and trustworthy; He is present with His sheep, able to defend them and watch over them through all the dangers they face. Knowing that we have such a Shepherd who is ready to protect us from danger, keep us close, and rescue us when we go astray truly is a great comfort to us, the sheep.”

To this, I say, “Amen!!”

Now, David Switches the metaphor and goes from God being a loving shepherd to Him being a welcoming host!

(Some think the metaphor continues, but I see a change in the imagery!)

God, as a welcoming host, is one who keeps his guest safe and secure in the midst of many dangers! (which is also seen by the rod in v. 4.)

We know this because David says, (v. 5 read)

Now, let's think this through for a sec...

When would you prefer to eat?

In the presence of friends or enemies?

But here is the great and grand protection and security of God that a feast can be set before our enemies and we can dine without fear, worry, concern or anxiety!!

He is a host who is undeniably for His guests!

In addition to this, the Lord receives His guest graciously, with the anointing of oil!

Anointing with oil in scripture has several meanings connected to it!

But one way was to show hospitality...(remember Jesus rebukes the Pharisees when He went to His house when He didn't anoint Him with oil, but a sinful woman did!)

So, as God anointed our head, it is a picture of Him welcoming us and receiving us!

God, as a welcome host, is also generous and abundant in His provision!

David says, "my cup overflows."

With God there is no such thing as lack!

There is no such thing as limited!

There is no such thing as a little!

With God, there is bounty, abundance, plenty!

And David says, "My cup overflows!"

I must be honest, I am learning to view God in this way! As the God of abundance!

I have been unintentionally trained to see God as one who is stingy...with only enough to supply very little!

But this is not our God!

He is a God of abundance and plenty!

He is the God who overflows cups!

This should cause you to rest in the fact that God can and will supply and meet you needs, according to His riches in glory!

He is a host who does not skimp! He overflows with cups!

David wraps of the Psalm with the same confidence with which he began.

He says in v. 6 (read)

This “surely” is one of extreme confidence!

This “surely” is one that is in every way is certain of it reality!

David is not second guessing...

He is not hoping or wishing...

He is not in between two opinions...

He is confidently asserting that the goodness and mercy of God will follow him all the days of his life!

And beloved, this should be your confident boast as well!

There should be settled and unalterable conviction and confidence that the goodness and mercy of God will follow you always!!

That there will never be a time or place where you go, including the valleys, where God's goodness and mercy!

The goodness and mercy of God follows you because your He is always with you!

Because of Christ, you live in a state of favor!

In other words, because of Christ, you will always be viewed by God as one who He sets His affection on! (one who is always pleased to aid and assist and care for!)

And David end by saying "and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD Forever."

What is the significance of the house of the Lord?

It was the place God's presence dwelt!

Translation (David says): "I will dwell and abide where the Spirit of the Lord is. And I will dwell there forever!"

This beloved, must be our boast and confidence!

We, like David, have granted unhindered access to God!

But, do we, like David, declare, I will dwell in the presence of God!?

Now, what must be clearly articulated and understood is that we do not deserve NONE OF THIS!!!

You are not owed God's presence, protection, comfort....

You receive this and more because of the Lord Jesus Christ, the good shepherd who laid down His life for the sheep!

So, when you think about who God is to you please be ever so mindful that there was a great associated with it!!

Beloved, we have come to the end of this Psalm!

My sincere desire is that based on this text you can with great clarity and conviction answer the two questions we began with:

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