

Describing the Indescribable: Jesus, The Great Shepherd



PSALM 23

On Psalm 23...

“This is the pearl of psalms whose soft and pure radiance delights every eye... It has been said that what the nightingale is among birds, that is this divine ode among the psalms, for it has sung sweetly in the ear of many a mourner in his night of weeping, and has bidden him hope for a morning of joy.” (Spurgeon)

“Depth and Simplicity underlie this Psalm. Its peace is not escape; its contentment is not complacency: there is readiness to face deep darkness and imminent attack, and the climax reveals a love which homes towards no material goal but to the Lord Himself”(Kidner)

Psalm 23 positioning

Sits between Psalm 22 and Psalm 24

Psalm 22: speaks of the death and crucifixion of Christ... "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me"

Psalm 24: ends with the coronation of Christ as King returning in glory

Psalm 23 speaks of Christ's intercessory work on behalf of believers

There are no green pastures, no still waters on the other side of the twenty-second psalm. It is only after we have read, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" that we come to "The Lord is my Shepherd." We must by experience know the value of blood-shedding, and see the sword awakened against the Shepherd, before we shall be able truly to know the Sweetness of the good Shepherd's care.(Spurgeon)

Theme of Psalm 23

Because Christ has met the full demands of God, through His intercessory ministry, He can perfectly care for His own both now and eternally

I. Jesus Calls and Keeps His Sheep (v. 1a)

“The Lord is my Shepherd”

How could David call YHWH HIS shepherd?

The same way, that if you are in Christ, you do

That in God’s electing, sovereign, grace He called you through the Gospel

In the Gospel, the Spirit awakened your dead heart to beat

He caused you to come to awareness of your sin

He caused you to see your need of a sacrifice in light of God’s holiness

He caused you look upon the finished work of Christ as your only hope to be reconciled to God

And He caused you to respond in faith and repentance

And you were reconciled to God through Christ, our Great Shepherd

The relationship between Christ and the believer is an exclusive one

II. Jesus abundantly provides for His Sheep (1b-2)

I shall not want. 2 He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside quiet waters.

“Come what may, if famine should devastate the land, or calamity destroy the city, "I shall not want." Old age with its feebleness shall not bring me any lack, and even death with its gloom shall not find me destitute. I have all things and abound; not because I have a good store of money in the bank, not because I have skill and wit with which to win my bread, but because "The Lord is my shepherd." The wicked always want, but the righteous never; a sinner's heart is far from satisfaction, but a gracious spirit dwells in the palace of content”
(Spurgeon)

Green pastures

Quiet waters

III. Jesus Restores and Guides (v.3)

3 He restores my soul; He guides me in the paths of righteousness For His name's sake.

Physical

Spiritual

- Sin

***Hebrews 12:11–12 (NASB95)** — 11 All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness. 12 Therefore, strengthen the hands that are weak and the knees that are feeble*

- **Spiritual weakness**

***31** Yet those who wait for the LORD Will gain new strength; They will mount up with wings like eagles, They will run and not get tired, They will walk and not become weary.*

IV. Jesus is Present and Sovereign over our Suffering

(v.4) 4 Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me

“This unspeakably delightful verse has been sung on many a dying bed, and has helped to make the dark valley bright times out of mind”(Spurgeon)

David wants us to know 2 things from this verse:

- 1) Understand that the Great Shepherd has ordained our dark valleys (Rom 8:28)**
- 2) Christ the Great Shepherd is present with us in the dark valleys (Matthew 28:20)**

“The shepherd is no longer ahead to lead, but alongside to escort.” (Kidner)

Question: What if I don't feel Christ's presence with me?

11 *"I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. 12 "He who is a hired hand, and not a shepherd, who is not the owner of the sheep, sees the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. 13 "He flees because he is a hired hand and is not concerned about the sheep.*

V. Jesus Prepares an Eternal Home (5-6)

5 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You have anointed my head with oil; My cup overflows.

Shift from Christ as Shepherd here to Christ as leader of the banquet

The imagery here is of the future, a banquet in heaven

The imagery encapsulates abundance (cup overflowing)

Imagery depicts celebration (head anointed with oil)

Imagery shows subjugation (enemies are subdued...they will look on at this feast and do nothing)

V. Jesus Prepares an Eternal Home (5-6)

Question: How does David respond?

6 Surely goodness and lovingkindness will follow me all the days of my life, And I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

Conclusion...

How much more should we rejoice in our Great Shepherd, the one who has shown us His Hesed, His lovingkindness, who called us, who secured us, who provides abundantly for us, who sanctifies us when we are in sin, who strengthens us in our spiritual weakness, who both ordains our dark valleys and walks with us through them comforting us along the way, and who has prepared a place for us to enjoy His presence forever. This is Jesus, The Great Shepherd.