

The Good Shepherd

Psalm 23

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

He makes me lie down in green pastures.

He leads me beside still waters.

He restores my soul.

He leads me in paths of righteousness

for his name's sake.

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,

I will fear no evil,

for you are with me;

your rod and your staff,

they comfort me.

You prepare a table before me

in the presence of my enemies;

you anoint my head with oil;

my cup overflows.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me

all the days of my life,

and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord

forever.

The twenty-third psalm. Probably the best known psalm of them all. Probably the one most people would say is their favorite.

By why? Why is this psalm such a favorite?

Well, there are probably many reasons. It speaks of the Lord's faithfulness. It talks of His care for us. It has a happy ending. And in this world where there are few happy endings and a lot of disappointment and sadness, this is something we yearn for.

Think about it . . .

Marriages end in divorce.

Our loved ones die, or Alzheimers steals them from us.

A friend betrays you.

Your dream job turned out to be not so dreamy after all.

Your car gets hit in the parking lot and the driver doesn't leave a note, leaving you to pay for it.

A co-worker takes credit for work you did.

And it's not just others - we disappoint ourselves too.

Jesus knows the realities of this life. He lived it with us. He knows the sting of His father's death. His friend betrayed Him. Lots of folks opposed Him, and some of those who followed Him for a while left when the going (or the words) got tough.

So Jesus knew a psalm like this is exactly what we needed.

When our tired soul needs restoring.

When we walk through the valley of the shadow of death.

When evil surrounds us.

When enemies bare their teeth.

When life in this world seems too much for us.

Jesus knows! Yes, and so had David pen these words. David, who was a shepherd himself, and needed someone to shepherd him. The Lord is my shepherd! Yes,

He is providing for me.

He is leading me.

He is restoring me.

He is with me.

He is comforting me.

He is feeding me.

He is giving me healing and joy.

And this all the days of my life! Until the day comes when I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

That doesn't mean life will be easy - you already know it's not! And sometimes maybe it seems as if our shepherd is asleep or not paying attention when troubles pop up and threaten us. But this psalm was written for just such times, to remind us that He is not. That He is faithful. The sin in this world and in us is going to hurt; there are consequences for what we do. But with our Lord and His forgiveness, there is a happy ending. He has overcome sin and death. He entered the valley of the shadow of death and came out alive on the other side! And so He'll lead you through too.

The Lord is my shepherd. And a very Good Shepherd is He!

Lord Jesus, thank You for being my Good Shepherd. I know that doesn't mean that I won't have any troubles! But thank You for not rejecting me because of my sin and the troubles I cause, and for being with me, watching over me, and helping me when the sin and troubles of this world arise and threaten to overwhelm me. They are too much for me but not too much for You! Help me to trust and believe and follow where You lead, knowing that You are leading me in the path of righteousness - the path that will end in eternal life with You. Amen.