

August 10, 2025 Session 11 God's Care Psalm 23

Intro: Have you ever been so lost that you did not know how to get back on track? God says "I know exactly where you are. Stay right there and I will come get you." God is like the best friend who instead of just giving directions, He comes to us. Jesus came to us, took our punishment, and showed us the way. This psalm is so familiar but yet so new. God tells us to "remember" not only who He is but what He has and will do. Why? We are created in His image, and with a purpose which is to serve and obey Him. God created us with a need for Him that nothing else can satisfy. I/we need God as much as we need air. However, our sinful nature and Satan relentlessly attack us. Their goal is to steer us away from our purpose. To appreciate even more how much God cares for us, and apply this psalm to our lives, we must become sheep: completely dependent, unable to save ourselves, and led through the challenges of this life. God gives us His loving supervision and protection in every season of our lives. Psalm 23 is written from the perspective of someone who has gone through some dark times. We all have gone through some dark times. Like David, we have learned some things about God's nature and our own limitations that can only be learned in the school of hard knocks.

God's Provision (Psalm 23:1-3) p. 98 David had plenty of experiences as both a shepherd and a warrior. Psalm 23 is one of the most theologically powerful of all the psalms. "It speaks of God's provision, protection, and care. It acknowledges the reality and threat of evil in the world and in our lives. Jesus prayed: **Luke 11:4b** *"And do not lead us into temptation but deliver us from the evil one."* Evil, Satan exists, and would lead us away from God! The psalm opens with a proclamation of faith. The Lord is my Shepherd, my personal care giver and life sustainer. In the Near Eastern culture, shepherds were almost in constant contact with their sheep, and they often had to lead their sheep great distances to provide them with food and water. Sheep actually recognized and followed the voice of their shepherd. My horses know my voice. I say "Good morning kids," and when I say "Places everyone," they all go to their prospective stalls (I don't know if

that works for Dan). **John 10:27** *“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, (God knows us!) and they follow Me.”*

There is joy in following Jesus! I am His sheep, but He is our sacrificial lamb. Jesus became one of us to save us. In the Old Testament, kings were often portrayed as shepherds, good and bad. **Jeremiah 23:1-2** *“Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of My pasture!” says the lord. Therefore thus says the LORD God of Israel against the shepherds who feed My people: “You have scattered My flock, driven them away, and not attended to them. Behold, I will attend to you for the evil of your doings.” says the LORD.”* It is interesting that the shepherd’s profession was considered to be the lowest of professions but yet the behavior of a shepherd is worthy of kings. King David was not ashamed of his former profession, and Jesus proclaimed to be my/our shepherd. “I have what I need” is both a declaration and a decision. David was not saying he had everything he wanted. He confessed he lacked nothing that was necessary. We need to separate our desires from our needs. While God may not provide us with everything we want, He will provide us with what we need.

Vs. 2 When people feel safe or unstressed, they can lay down and rest. Have you ever tried to sleep unsuccessfully when your mind is racing and won’t shut off, good or bad? We may have fear of some danger, or physical pain. We may be worried about things concerning finances or be concerned about someone, the list is endless. Jesus gives us a place of rest and safety from our enemies. When Jesus was asked if it was lawful to heal on the Sabbath, He responded with a sheep situation. **Matthew 12:11** *“Then He [Jesus] said to them, “What man is there among you who has one sheep, and if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not lay hold of it and lift it out?”* Jesus lifted me out of the pit of hell into His glorious light! God wants to lead us to green pastures and still waters. Soft grass is not only good to eat but soft to lay upon. Sheep would not drown in calm waters but be refreshed. Jesus is our guide, provider, and protector. Sometimes water is used as a metaphor for danger in the psalms, but it is also necessary for life. Like the Phoenix, Arizona climate, Israel did not get much rain. Israel’s annual rainfall is only twenty-five inches. Green pastures and calm

waters were a pleasing imagery to the reader. Come what may, our soul is protected, and eternal life with Jesus is certain.

Revelation 7:17 *“For the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them [us] and lead them to living fountains of water. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”*

Vs. 3 He, Jesus, renews my/our lives! We all know what it is like to be exhausted, but after a little food and rest, we regain our strength. God refreshed David’s spirit. The Hebrew word translated life literally means “breath.” God breathed the breath of life into the first man and continues to breathe life into us through Jesus and His word. Jesus identified Himself as the gate for the sheep through which they would enter God’s pasture to find salvation. **John 10:7** *“Then Jesus said to them again, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep.’”* The right paths are the ways of God, the straight path in which a person should walk—the lifestyle which a believer in God should live. God does not just teach us how we should live; He leads His people along His right paths. Everything God does is ultimately for His name’s sake, not ours. When God forgives, leads, and provides, it is for His purposes, His honor, and His glory. God gets the glory, but His actions are also for the good of His people.

God’s Protection (Psalm 23:4) p. 100

We can trust and seek refuge in God’s protection. However that does not mean the absence of trials, but the confidence that God will strengthen and shelter us during our trials. Sometimes shepherds must lead their sheep through narrow and dangerous places. The apostle Paul writes that nothing can separate us from the love of God.

Romans 8:38-39 *“For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

Darkness is often associated with the absence of God: darkest valley, shadow of death, but God is light, and in His light, in His presence we “will fear no evil” (I like the NKJ translation). Jesus, Immanuel, God is with us. The shepherd’s rod was more like a club and used to ward off any animals that threatened the flock. It was also used to correct, protect, and count the sheep. The staff was longer, sometimes with a

hook on one end. It could be used to pull sheep out of harm's way, guide the flock, and rescue sheep that got themselves into tight spots. These shepherd's tools were a comfort, not something to be feared, like the gun a law enforcement officer carries. God's wrath should be feared, but we wear the cloak of righteousness placed upon us by Jesus when we accepted Him as our savior.

God's Care (Psalm 23:5-6) p. 101

As a host would care for an honored guest, the Lord attended to David's needs, God's goodness and love were constantly with him, as they are with all of God's people. The imagery for God shifts from that of a Shepherd to that of a banquet Host. The table imagery also reminds us of the Passover meal, which was eaten just before Israel faced down the army of the Egyptians, and the Lord's Supper when Jesus symbolized for remembrance the sacrifice He would soon become. Our enemies are ultimately powerless to harm us in any eternal sense. "My cup overflows" is a common metaphor in Scripture. It can refer to blessings or the salvation of the righteous. It can also refer to God's judgment upon the wicked. Goodness refers to God's moral goodness which is a part of His character. When Moses asked to see God's glory, God showed him goodness. **Exodus 33:19** *"Then He [God] said, 'I will make all My goodness pass before you and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before you. I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.'"*

Vs. 6 The NKJ translation uses the word "follow" instead of "pursue." *"Only goodness and faithful love will pursue me."* I like to be pursued by God's goodness and faithful love all the days of my life. God doesn't give up and knows I/we need Him. To dwell in God's house is to be in His presence. God's house is much more than a building. David was not speaking of visiting a physical building. David was writing about the importance of living one's life in God's presence, in fellowship with Him. The imagery describes God's eternal dwelling with His people.