

THE SHEPHERD OF MY SOUL

Psalm 23

A pastor talks about how a friend of his came to him after seeing his medical doctor about strange physical symptoms. The medical doctor could find nothing wrong with this friend physically. But as they talked the doctor saw how nervous and tense the friend was suggesting that he sees his minister. The friend explained to the minister how he was so overworked and stressed out. The man was anxious and nervous. He was literally “worried sick.” The pastor gave him a spiritual prescription. He was to go home and read Psalm 23, five times each day for a week. When he got up; when he ate breakfast, lunch, and dinner and then again when he went to bed. A week later the man and his pastor got back together, and he was a new man.

The story reveals the redemptive power of knowing that we have a faithful and good shepherd of our souls Jesus said, I AM the Good Shepherd. And later the Apostle Peter in his writings identifies Jesus as The Great Shepherd. They use this title to prompt us to think about King David’s writing of Psalm 23.

King David, who before he became a mighty king was a shepherd of sheep himself. Good Shepherd, there is nothing more fulfilling and meaningful in our lives. The great God of the universe is interested in us knowing His personal name, Yahweh. And this Great Shepherd knows us, and our needs better than we know ourselves. Everything He thinks toward us is for our good and blessing. We could ask for nothing more than His care and oversight. The rest of the Psalm then is a fuller description of the depth of care that He expresses in our lives

Let us read Psalm 23 together.

Today we are going to look at verse 2 and the first part of verse 3. *“He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul.”*

All three initiatives will restore us to a proper condition. We could use words like, **revive, recondition, recharge, reset, renew**. Do you know when you need restoration?

When we greet each other, we often will ask, “How are you doing?” Most of the time we will say things like *“Fine,” “Good,”* or *“OK”* if we are not sure. I had one friend who would say, *“I’m Blessed.”* When we are being honest, we might say, *“I’m so tired,”* or *“I’m so busy.”* But what if someone were to ask you, *“How is your soul?”* That is a much harder question to answer. We do not often take the time to even examine the condition of our soul. It is that deeper part of who we really are. **How is your soul?**

Think about these following statements or questions....

- Do Little things put me over the edge?
- I cannot get to sleep, and I cannot get up.
- My plate is too full, and my heart is too empty.
- I cannot find my Bible and I am not praying about anything specific.
- You have not been reading the word
- I know it is wrong, but I have no self-control.

If we can say yes to any of these questions, we need the good shepherd to help us in rest!

How can He do that?

I. HE PROVIDES PLACES OF REST FOR MY SOUL

(Psalm 4:8)

“He makes me lie down in green pastures”

An interesting fact is that Sheep will not lie down on their own. They will continue restlessly walking around in circles. If there is anything that creates the least amount of fear, they will never lie down. If there is tension in the flock, a sheep cannot rest. Being annoyed by parasites on their bodies will keep them up all night. And a hungry sheep cannot relax. They are nervous, anxious, tense animals that need caring for and sometimes forced to lie down. The shepherd will do all he can to help a sheep relax and if necessary, will force the sheep to lie down.

Psalm 4:8 notices that picture of the Great Shepherd’s role in helping us rest.

*“In peace I will both lie down and sleep; for you alone,
O Lord, make me to dwell in safety.”*

Psalm 4:8

#1 Look Back – We need to begin by examining our lives for unconfessed sin. When we sin, there is something in our souls that needs cleansing and forgiveness. It might not just be sins that we have committed ... but sins of omission. **Love** that we should have expressed but was not. **Forgiveness** that we need to give but have not. **Grace** that someone needs, but we have withheld. It is also a time to look back on our lives and see all the reasons to praise Him. The pressures and problems of the moment cause us to forget that He has been faithful, merciful, and gracious in so many ways.

#2 Look Around – Then we begin to consider needs and concerns of other people around us. This is the antidote for thinking that *“It’s all about me.”* A sick soul is one that thinks only of themselves. *“Woe is me,”* always leads to more *“woe is me.”*

#3 Look Ahead – Our passion for moving forward is in our vision of what God has for our lives. What does He have in mind for you to be and do? This is the way that He increases our hope and expectancy. When we have properly rested, we get up with a renewed energy to take on challenges because faith increases.

#4 Look Up – Then probably most importantly we must “*Turn your eyes upon Jesus Look for in his wonderful face.*” This is a season of personal worship and adoration. It gets the spiritual focus so that the physical obstacles we face become much easier to deal. But how does the Good Shepherd provide for our rest?

Sabbath Rest

The fourth commandment to keep the Sabbath is often the most repeated. Isaiah 58:13 records this prophecy “*Keep the Sabbath day holy. Do not pursue your own interests on that day but enjoy the Sabbath and speak of it with delight as the LORD’s holy day. Honor the Sabbath in everything you do on that day, and don’t follow your own desires or talk idly.*” He designed and created us to be able to work 6 days and then rest on the seventh. When we do not obey our creator’s design, we find our souls becoming weak and tired.

- a. **Worship TOGETHER** – There is something special about worshipping with others that helps revive the soul. This is the aspect of looking up ... but looking up together to encourage each other in our faith and worship. The Psalms are the songs of David, but in large measure the worship is communal. “*I was glad when they said let’s go to the house of the Lord.*”
- b. **Word of God** – God’s Word is another means of the Shepherd feeding our souls fresh nutrition. The “*green pastures*” that we lie down in are the words of life that feed our inner beings. Let the Word of Christ dwell in your richly.
- c. **Minister in your GIFTEDNESS** – When we serve in our own strength and natural abilities, we become tired and depleted. But when we are ministering in God-given spiritual giftedness, we find that our ministry is successful, and we are full of energy.
- d. **Fellowship – Have fun with friends!** There is something that is so refreshing to our souls to be with people we know and love. Our time over the Christmas holidays was quite busy. But the hours spent around lunch and dinner tables talking and sharing was soul refreshing.

II. HE LEADS ME ALONG PLACES OF REFRESHMENT

“He leads me by still waters.”

How He refreshes while on our journey. The picture that King David is creating is a shepherd leading the sheep down a path and alongside the path is a refreshing babbling brook of clear cool water. Water always represents spiritual refreshment. So that the meaning is that as we go along following the Shepherd, we will get weary and tired. We may come across obstacles and problems that challenge our walk on this journey. There are temptations on our journey that seem too much to bear. And our Shepherd says take a drink from this stream of living water. We may face the pain of rejection and He says look, here is the fresh stream of water for your soul. Serious stuff happens to good people, and we can become tempted in bitterness and anger. The Shepherd points us to the side of the path where the water is still and cool and refreshing.

“The LORD will guide you continually, giving you water when you are dry and restoring your strength. You will be like a well-watered garden, like an ever-flowing spring”

Isaiah 58:11

That is a promise for your journey with Jesus. Jesus tells us in **Matthew 5:6** that it is a blessing to feel spiritual thirst:

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.”

Matthew 5:6

And then **John in 7:37-38**, he records the words of Jesus that call us to himself when we our souls are feeling dry and empty:

“If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’”

John in 7:37-38

How is your soul? Is there a dryness to it this morning? In the week behind you have you faced troubles, fears, hardships or an all-out attack and your soul is dry and thirsty. Here those words of Jesus and drink of his presence and grace. Then the last phrase we'll look at this morning ... He renews my life when I am down.

III. HE RESTORES MY SOUL

The imagery here is associated with *Psalm 42:11*:

“Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God.”

Psalm 42:11

When sheep fall over on their back, they are not able to get up on their own. The Psalmist called it **“casting a sheep.”** A sheep on its back is life threatening. The Shepherd saves the life of a sheep by helping it get back up. David must have “cast his sheep” repeatedly in his career. He knew how desperate their situation was. And here he tells how the Good Shepherd restores us and sets us back on our feet again when we have fallen.

We fall due to a multitude of reasons. Sometimes we fall because we have not taken time to rest or we have not taken spiritual refreshment for our soul, and we become too weak and weary to stand. We fall over and cannot get up. Other times serious stuff just happens.

There are also sins committed against us that injure us and put us on our backs. Emotional, physical, and even sexual abuse is so prevalent and knocks us down. by Our own sin against God and others knocks us down. Sometimes we are dealing with the pain of the consequences of our sin. That is a reality. But we do not have to live with the guilt and shame of our sin. That is what really keeps us down.

We have a Shepherd who has already **forgiven us and** removed our guilt and washed away our **shame**. Jesus' death on the cross dealt with the **guilt** of our sinfulness and His blood cleanses us from all **shame**. While we might have trouble walking because of the consequences, we are set on our feet and can humbly walk in **repentance**.

You see the Great and Good Shepherd has faced all the things that knock us down. He was tired and frustrated continuously in His life on earth, but He showed us where and how to draw spiritual strength and endurance for the journey. Really dreadful things happened to Him. Yet He was a sheep that never complained or fought back.

Government and spiritual leaders abused him. Yet He endured. He committed no sin, yet His death was a punishment for sin. But it was your and my sin for which caused His unjust punishment on the cross. Therefore, He can rescue and restore us. His blood can forgive us and cleanse us from all our sin.

I had a friend and he related to me how he had come into a relationship with Christ. He had been going through a tough time and was wrestling with doubts and questions about life and God. He was tired and weary of life. He described his life as feeling like he was going to drown. He called out to God asking for Him to make Himself real.

And then that night in a dream a man dressed in white came to him while he was sinking in a pool of polluted water. The man reached down and pulled away leaves and debris and dirt from a drain. And the polluted water drained away, and he was safe. The man in white held then hugged him. And he recognized it was Jesus, the Great Shepherd who had restored his soul.

How about you this morning?

How is your soul?

Are you ready to let the Saviour be your Good Shepherd

and restore you and make you a new person?

C:/Documents/Word/Sermon 2022/Psalms/Psalms 23

Date: Jan 2/2021

Place: FCA

Time: 10:30Am

Song: There Was Jesus

The Shepherd of My Soul

Psalms 23

I. HE PROVIDES PLACES OF REST FOR MY SOUL (*Psalm 4:8*)

- #1 – Look Back
- #2 – Look Around
- #3 – Look Ahead
- #4 – Look Up

Sabbath Rest

Worship Together
Word of God
Minister in your Giftedness
Fellowship

II. HE LEADS ME ALONG PLACES OF REFRESHMENT (*Matthew 5:6; John 7:37-38*)

III. HE RESTORES MY SOUL (*Psalms 42:11*)

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and restore you and make you a new person?