

Psalm 23

3.29.26

Message 4

Songs in the Key of Jesus

Psalm 23 (ESV)

The LORD Is My Shepherd

23 A PSALM OF DAVID.

- ¹ The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.
- ² He makes me lie down in green pastures.
He leads me beside still waters.
- ³ He restores my soul.
He leads me in paths of righteousness
for his name's sake.
- ⁴ 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.
- ⁵ You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.
- ⁶ Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me

all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD
forever.

Not my Song

A. We know that David wrote this song.

1. David likely reflected on his time as a shepherd of sheep.
2. The long, solitary hours, when it was him, a flock of sheep, and the Lord.
3. I wonder if this was one of David's favorite songs, just like it is for many of us.

B. Psalm 23 might be the best-known Psalm.

1. Maybe it was read at grandpa's funeral.
2. Maybe it hangs on a piece of décor in your house or is printed on the bookmark in your Bible.
3. Consider this: Long before a preacher said this prayer at a loved one's funeral, Jesus experienced every word and every line.

C. David sang it first, but Jesus sang it best.

1. An old theologian and pastor named Andrew Bonar said it like this:
2. The Church has so exclusively... applied this Psalm to herself as almost to forget that her shepherd, ("that Great Shepherd!"), once needed it and was glad to use it. The Lamb, (now in the midst of the throne, ready to lead us to living fountains of water) was once led along by His father. Andrew Bonar¹

This morning, instead of reading Psalm 23 as our song, let's put it on Jesus' lips.

Jesus' Song.

A. Can you picture this on the lips of Jesus during his last hours?

1. God, you are my shepherd, I have what I need.
2. God, you are leading me on the right path...even though it leads to Golgotha.

¹ Ash, 264.

3. Even though I walk through this darkness, the crowds, the hissing, the pain, I fear nothing/I fear no evil, for you are with me.

4. You prepare a table for me, in the Presence of my Enemies.

5. Though Jesus' head flowed with blood, Jesus could proclaim, You anoint my head with oil...

6. Even though the cup of God's wrath flowed upon Jesus, Jesus could still proclaim, "My cup overflows."

B. Consider this Song in the Playlist.

1. If Psalm 20 and 21 were leading up to the crucifixion, and

2. Psalm 22 is the song of the cross,

3. Where does that put this song?

C. What if, WHAT IF, this is the song of preparation and the song of the tomb.

1. If Psalm 20-21 was sung on Thursday, and Psalm 22 was sung on Friday, then maybe this was Saturday's playlist.

2. The message of this song, the careful, guiding, protecting presence of God in the middle of trouble, seems perfectly suited for a man waiting to be raised from the dead.

The Shepherd Sings

A. Shepherding is a consistent theme throughout Scripture.

1. The Patriarchs were shepherds.

2. Moses was demoted from the palace and interned as a shepherd for 40 years before he could lead Israel out of Egypt.

3. King David was a shepherd, something his son Solomon never was.

B. In John 10, Jesus claims to be the Good Shepherd.

1. The presence of a good shepherd means there were bad shepherds.

2. Ezekiel 34 called out the leaders of Israel as being evil shepherds.

a. Notice what was prophesied long before Jesus.

b. Ezekiel 34:23-24 (CSB)

²³I will establish over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he will shepherd them. He will tend them himself and will be their shepherd. ²⁴I, the LORD, will be their God, and my servant David will be a prince among them. I, the LORD, have spoken.

C. Jesus is the Good Shepherd, and he is the one who was prophesied about in Ezekiel 34:23

1. But in this moment, Jesus cries out to the Father.
2. Knowing that God has a plan for you doesn't mean the moment isn't painful.
 - a. Knowing that God works all things for our good doesn't mean that what we are enduring is actually good.
3. Jesus uses the language of shepherding, which was first sung by David, to describe what He was experiencing.
 - a. Jesus is in need of a Shepherd.
 - b. He is walking through a time of trouble like never before.
4. So, the same Jesus who cries My God, My God, is also able to sing, "The Lord is my Shepherd."

The Song of Sheep.

- A. First, it bothers me that the plural of sheep is sheep.
1. Whether you have one sheep or a thousand sheep, the word is the same.
 2. Amazingly, Psalm 23 is personal.
 3. The Lord is MY Shepherd...personal and possessive.
 - a. There maybe be hundreds of sheep.
 - b. But the Psalm speaks of 1 Shepherd.
 4. This is part of the beauty.
 - a. David sang "the Lord is my Shepherd, and it's true.
 - b. Jesus sang the same, and it's true.
 - c. We sing it, and it's true.
 5. Notice how this Psalm applies to Jesus.

B. Jesus submitted His life and will to the Father.

1. For the Lord to be our Shepherd, we have to have the right perspective of who God is and who we are.
 - a. Jesus prayed, “not my will but your will be done.”
 - b. Jesus submitted to God, even though it led to the cross.
 - c. Jesus TRUSTED the Father to lead Him to where He should go.
 - d. Truly, the Lord shepherded and guided Jesus to the Cross.
 - e. Far from abandoning Him, the Father walked with Him through these moments and through the process.

C. Jesus was satisfied with the will of the Father.

- a. We read this, “I shall not want.”
 1. I want lots of things: a new watch, a new gun, a new guitar, a new book, a new suit...
 2. The desire of my flesh is never satisfied.
- b. But Jesus wanted nothing more than to do the will of the Father (Jn 6:39-40).
- c. Jesus had everything He needed to fulfill the will of God.

D. Jesus was given rest and calm.

Psalm 23:2–3 (ESV)

² He makes me lie down in green pastures.

He leads me beside still waters.

³ He restores my soul.

He leads me in paths of righteousness

for his name’s sake.

- a. The shepherd’s job was to find pasture for the sheep and calm waters.

1. A sheep will not eat, drink, or rest where there is chaos.

2. I’ve read that even if the water is moving too quickly, a sheep won’t drink.

3. The waters need to be still and calm for them to rest enough to drink.
- b. As the Father led Jesus to the place where He would die for the sins of the world, Jesus was not frantic.
 1. He trusted the Father and trusted where the Father was leading.
 2. The word for “paths” means wagon trails.
 - a. It could be seen as a well-traveled path.
 - b. No other person experienced what Jesus did.
 - c. But the Lord had led countless multitudes on the path of righteousness.
 - d. The Father knows the route and the path, the sheep need not worry.
 3. The Father was leading His Son on the path of righteousness, even though it led to crucifixion and death.
- c. Allow me to apply this to us:
 1. Some of the places God leads you will be hard and difficult.
 2. God leads us to and through hard places.
 3. **The path of righteousness is well used but not paved.**

Psalm 23:3–4 (ESV)

- ³ He restores my soul.
He leads me in paths of righteousness
for his name’s sake.
- ⁴ 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.

E. **Jesus is led through the Valley.**

1. Notice the connection: leads me in paths of righteousness, I walk through the valley of the shadow of death.

2. The path of righteousness takes us through the valley of death's shadow.

a. Jesus felt this to his core.

b. Jesus lived a perfectly righteous life.

c. And He was crucified.

3. For three days and nights, Jesus walked through the Valley of the Shadow Death.

a. It's a little unclear exactly what the spirit of Jesus did while the body of Jesus lay in the tomb.

b. He at least descended to hell and preached freedom to the captives.

c. I think it could be argued from the Book of Hebrews that Jesus also went and offered His blood as a sacrifice in the Heavenly Temple.

4. At the very least, Jesus trusted that God would raise Him from the dead.

a. That God's plan, the Father's will, would not result in Jesus being left in a tomb, that his existence would not cease.

b. NO, Jesus believed that the Father would lead Him through the Darkest Valley.

c. In the dark, the sheep must listen for the voice of the shepherd to guide them. Jesus trusted the Father to lead Him through the Valley.

5. Consider this for our own lives:

a. If we know the voice of God, and we trust Him, even when life is at its hardest, we follow the voice of the Shepherd who is leading us.

b. We trust that He knows the way and won't leave us here to stay.

c. And someday, when our time to leave this world comes, we have this confidence: That God is not leaving us in this valley, but He is carrying us through.

6. Spurgeon Quote:

Observe that it is not walking *in* the valley, but *through* the valley. We go through the dark tunnel of death and emerge into the light of immortality. We do not die,

we do but sleep to wake in glory. Death is not the house but the porch, not the goal but the passage to it.

F. Jesus was comforted.

1. What do the rod and staff do?
 - a. The Hebrew word for comfort means “to deliver from fear.”²
 - b. In the Psalms, it is used not for a group of people, but for an individual.
2. David sang this and felt the comfort.
 - a. Jesus sang it and felt the comfort.
 - b. The Church sings it and feels the comfort.
3. And every single one of us can walk through the darkest valleys and know that we are not alone.
 - a. Not only is God with us...
 - b. But, consider this, other Saints are with us.
4. A shepherd with only one sheep is not a good shepherd.
 - a. A shepherd looks over a whole flock and yet each sheep, if they could talk, would say “that’s my shepherd.”
 - b. How much more God, who cares for all of us and cares for each of us.
 - c. You may feel alone in the valley, but you are not alone, for God is with us, and He has others on the same path, walking through the same valley.

From Shepherd to Host

Notice the last two verses:

Psalm 23:5–6 (ESV)

⁵ You prepare a table before me

² In prophetic texts, the piel of *nhm* expresses Yahweh’s comforting of the people as a group. By contrast, the Psalms apply the verb to the individual worshiper. Here the meaning of the piel has been spiritualized and generalized. In Ps. 23:4 “comfort” is tantamount to “deliver from fear” TDOT, Vol 9 352.

in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.

- ⁶ Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD
forever.

A. There is a bit of debate on this next section.

1. Does this still apply to a sheep and shepherd metaphor?
2. Or does the picture change?
3. I want to explore the idea that the image changes from Shepherd to Host.

B. **The Lord eats at the victory table.**

1. It could be that this envisions a shepherd leading his sheep to the table land, and on the other side of the darkest valley is a land of great pasture.
2. But it also envisions a victory banquet.
3. If so, **Jesus isn't eating a meal surrounded by active enemies; Jesus is eating surrounded by defeated enemies.**

C. **The Lord is anointed and blessed.**

1. If this Psalm pictures a victory banquet, then the oil is a sign of victory and blessing
 - a. Instead of a wounded sheep, Jesus is the victorious King enjoying the benefits and blessings of a hard fought victory.
 - b. The enemy must now watch as Jesus and His followers enjoy the Messianic banquet.
2. The cup overflows.
 - a. Sheep don't drink from cups.
 - b. But Jesus does, and **the cup of God's wrath has now been replaced with the cup of blessing.**

D. **The Victorious Jesus experiences the blessing and presence of God.**

1. Because Jesus was obedient, He is crowned with many crowns, and all the glory and honor belong to Him.
2. And He shares that with us.
3. We reap the benefits and blessings of Jesus' victory.
4. So much so that the goodness and mercy of God doesn't just follow us (the English is too weak here) but chases us down and overwhelms us.
5. The reward is that we spend forever in the presence of God.

Why I want to Sing Psalm 23

1. **I want to sing like Jesus.**

Revelation 7:17 (CSB)

¹⁷For the Lamb who is at the center of the throne will shepherd them; he will guide them to springs of the waters of life, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.

A. Because Jesus went before us, because He walked the valley of death, because He stayed true to the paths of righteousness, we get to follow in His steps.

1. He blazed the trail.
2. He defeated the enemies before us.

B. Every person who embraces Jesus as Lord and Savior need not fear death.

1. We need not fear the darkness and shadows.
2. We need not worry where the path leads.
3. We can trust the Lord, even when we feel like God has abandoned us.

2. **I want to be owned by Jesus.**

A. In our culture, to be called a sheep is not a compliment.

1. Sheep are those who need protecting.
2. Sheepdogs are those who protect the sheep from the wolves.

3. But in the kingdom of God, we aren't given the option of being a sheepdog.

B. Spurgeon said it like this:

No man has a right to consider himself the Lord's sheep unless his nature has been renewed, for the scriptural description of unconverted men does not picture them as sheep, but as wolves or goats. A sheep is an object of property, not a wild animal; its owner sets great store by it, and frequently it is bought with a great price. It is well to know, as certainly as David did, that we belong to the Lord.³

1. Spurgeon is right:

2. You are either one of the Lord's sheep, or you are a wolf or goat.

3. You either belong in Jesus' flock, and He is your Good Shepherd, or you are lost and vulnerable.

4. Better to be one of Jesus' sheep than one of Satan's goats.

C. Jesus wants to be your Shepherd.

1. He isn't looking for elite level sheep.

2. He isn't checking the breeding stock and sorting through.

3. He wants to collect them all.

4. No matter how far you have wandered, there is still room for you at Jesus' victory table.

3. I want to live with Jesus.

A. There are two types of people:

1. Pets in the house people.

2. Animals outside people.

3. Your perspective on this question will influence how you interpret the last of this Psalm.

B. It ends with, "I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever."

³ C. H. Spurgeon, *The Treasury of David: Psalms 1-26*, vol. 1 (London; Edinburgh; New York: Marshall Brothers, n.d.), 353–354.

1. I don't think sheep live in the Temple and they don't live forever.
2. But people do.
3. Because of Jesus, You are invited to live in the house of the Lord forever.
4. And as much as I have to look forward to in this life, the more I look forward to living with Jesus and all the saints.
5. Each achievement, each goal, seems empty compared to the promise of dwelling with God forever and ever.
6. Every tear that is cried points toward a day when I will cry no more, when the Good Shepherd reaches down to me and wipes them from my eyes.

That kind of relationship can begin today.

What does it look like to walk out Psalm 23?

Let me tell you from Erik Dattwyler's perspective:

Erik Dattwyler Story

Up in Rolla hospital in mid 2021 COVID turned for the worst for me and I ended up in ICU on a ventilator. I had many tubes in my body and a trach in my throat and by the grace of God I woke after 18 days on the ventilator. My recovery was hard, after 18 days my body lost a lot of my muscles. I couldn't walk, I could barely sit up. I couldn't eat drink or talk due to all the muscles in my mouth and throat were diminished from the ordeal. I would try to write things I wanted to say on a piece of paper with a pen, but had trouble holding the pen, plus my mind was kinda hazy. A week went by, and a respiratory nurse came to my room with a cap for my trach so that I could talk with a "Robot Voice." It was hard for me to breathe when it was on, so I had to practice. First time she put it on, I held my wife's hand, and I spoke after so many days. My wife and the nurse were crying as I quoted Psalm 23 in a robot voice. ----- The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters. He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness For His name's sake. Yea, 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 runs over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me All the days of my life; And I will dwell in the house of the Lord Forever. ----- I have lived out this Psalm in my life and currently enjoying the last 2 verses. God is Faithful

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