

Jehovah Roi: The Lord My Shepherd, Pt. 2

הוהי הער

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Text: Psalm 23

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Series: Drawing Near to God through His Name

Midweek Prayer Meeting

Introduction: Open your Bibles to **Psalm 23** We continue our series entitled, “Drawing Near to God through His Name” and today we are going to learn that God is Jehovah-Roi: The Lord is My Shepherd. The Title Roi, means the One who Sees Where I AM – but it’s common term that we know is “Shepherd”.

We find this title in Psalm 23.

The Psalm begins with “The LORD is my Shepherd; I shall not want”. I will not lack anything! Or “What more shall I want?”

Many of the OT names for God is seen in this psalm: *Jehovah-Jireh*, “The Lord will provide” (Gen. 22:13–14); *Jehovah-Rapha*, “The Lord will heal or restore” (Ex. 15:26); *Jehovah-Shalom*, “The Lord our peace” (Jud. 6:24); *Jehovah-Tsidkenu*, “The Lord our righteousness,” (Jer. 23:6); *Jehovah-Shammah*, “The Lord is there,” (Ezek. 48:35); *Jehovah-Nissi*, “The Lord our banner” (Ex. 17:8–15); and *Jehovah-Roi*, “The Lord my shepherd” (Ps. 23:1). In other words, Jesus Christ is to His sheep all that they ever need.

As the little child said when misquoting this psalm, “The Lord is my shepherd—what more shall I want?”¹

Psalm 23 (ESV) — “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.”

Last Sunday evening we said how...

- Our Shepherd cares for our **needs** (vs. 1).
- Our Shepherd cares for our **food** (vs. 2a).

¹ Wiersbe, W. W. (1993). *Wiersbe's expository outlines on the Old Testament* (Ps 23). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

- Our Shepherd cares for our **health** (vs. 2b).
- Our Shepherd cares for our **healing** (vs. 3).

I. The Shepherd **leads** the sheep, vs. 3, “*He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name’s sake*”.

Sheep need the shepherd to lead them, otherwise they will follow each other to nowhere, and go astray. The shepherd keeps the sheep on the move; they cannot be left on the same ground too long. There must be a deliberate planned rotation from one grazing ground to another in line with the principles of sound management. The shepherd knows where the flock will thrive and where the feeding is poor. Whenever the gate is opened to a fresh pasture, even the old ewes kick up their heels and leap with delight.

A. The shepherd leads us in the best paths, not necessarily the **easiest** ones (Jms. 1:2-3).

Sheep are notoriously creatures of habit. They love their comfort zone. But this is a dangerous behavior. Sheep need a shepherd to move them to new places to graze. Well worn grazing spots become infested with parasites of all kinds. If they persist in grazing on old polluted ground, it will be to their detriment.

God as our shepherd leads us “in paths of righteousness”. We must seek to simply do as the shepherd commands. We move to fresh ground through each act of obedience.

God leads us to all kinds of life experiences that we would almost never choose for ourselves. But God knows what is best! And **we follow Him to fresh ground in obedience!**

Whenever the shepherd opens the way to new pasture land, there is a sense of excitement in the flock. **They know that they have been led their for their own good and nourishment.**

There are several applications we get here. God moves us through various experiences in life – high mountains and deep valleys. We need to say “Thank you, God” where ever we are in life.

James 1:2–3 (ESV) – “Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, 3 for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness.”

You might say, “Why?”

- Why my health?
- Why do I have to live where it’s cold?
- Some days you might say: why this marriage? Why this church? Why this job?

Principle: Where ever God leads you, serve Him in the paths of righteousness.

B. As God's sheep, I'm not free to choose my **own** way (Jn. 10:27; 1-14; Isa. 53:6; Pro. 14:12).

Like a dead fish, sheep left to themselves seem tend to follow the path of least resistance if they are without a shepherd. But calls after His sheep to keep them from danger. Jesus said in **John 10:27** (ESV) — "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me."

Are you listening to the voice of your Good Shepherd? Are you allowing Him to **lead you in the paths of righteousness for His Name's sake?**

We must be careful to follow the shepherd! Just as sheep blindly follow the sheep in front of him, even if it's over a cliff, we'll go astray!

Isaiah 53:6 (ESV) — "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all."

To go my "own way" means to carry out my own wishes, even though my heart, which is "desperately wicked" (**Jer. 17:9**), often leads me astray. Often my heart leads me to not listen to my family or my church.

We often cling to habits that will ruin our lives. Our way often seems right! **Proverbs 14:12** (ESV) — "There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death."

As Christ's sheep, Jesus calls us out of our way and into His way. Consider **John 10:1-15**,

Exclusivity of Christ, the only Way

John 10:1-2, "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door but climbs in by another way, that man is a thief and a robber. 2 But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep."

Christ Calls His Sheep

John 10:3-5, "To him the gatekeeper opens. The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. 4 When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice.

Beware of Hired Hands

John 10:5-15, "5 A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers."⁶ This figure of speech Jesus used with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them. ⁷ So Jesus again said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. 8 All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to

them. 9 I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture. 10 The **thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy**. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly. 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 does not own 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 cares nothing for the sheep. 14 I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, 15 just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep.”

Christ’s sheep follow Him. “**A stranger they will not follow**” (Jn. 10:5). This does not mean sheep do not err. They do, they get into “fender-benders”. They sometimes go astray. But they do not have a practice of rebellion against the shepherd. True sheep trust the good shepherd. “**A stranger they will not follow**” (Jn. 10:5). They may stumble after a stranger, but they eventually turn back to the shepherd.

C. The Good Shepherd will never lead us except where He **Himself** has been (Heb. 4:15-16; 1 Cor. 10:13).

The Shepherd knows all that we will go through because He’s been there already. Are we expected to endure rejection? He was rejected by His peers, His friends, and indeed, for a moment, God Himself. Does He want us to face poverty? He has done that too. And then death, not a natural death, but a violent death, based on false accusations—that’s what He endured.

Hebrews 4:15–16 (ESV) — “For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. 16 Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”

Paths that are a surprise to the sheep are never a surprise to the shepherd. Life is easier when we remember that the shepherd never forsakes his sheep. Through sickness and despair, in valleys and deserts, the shepherd is there.

D. The Shepherd’s **reputation** is at stake, vs. 3, “*He leads me in paths of righteousness for **his name’s sake**”.*

Remember that the reputation of the shepherd is at stake. He leads us in righteous paths, “for His name’s sake.” We have been purchased at high cost; the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit will not abandon us. This Shepherd will never be accused of being unable to care for those entrusted to Him.

When the shepherd comes back at night to count the sheep, he may count each one, calling each by name. When he discovers that one is still out in the wild he leaves the

flock in the care of a trusted servant and trudges over the route that he and the flock traveled that day. He calls out to the sheep in the darkness. His name is at stake. He will seek after His sheep.

If we are “cast down” he sees us on our backs, beating the air, and He restores us back to the fold.

E. Finally, the shepherd always **seeks** the sheep; sheep never seek the shepherd.

Sheep will get lost, but they cannot get themselves found until the shepherd has sought them out.

“I Found the Lord”

You’ve heard people say, “I found the Lord back in 1990.” We know what they mean, but actually they were not looking for Christ; Christ came looking for them, “no man can come to me except the Father draw him,” (**John 6:44**). God wasn’t lost; we were!

Tonight the Good Shepherd is leading you. If you find Him prompting you to return and rejoin the flock, or to get closer to Him, be obedient.

II. The Shepherd protects the sheep, vs. 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*”.

- Life has its hills and its valleys; its storms and its calm. And in the end of the journey, **we must all face death**.
- Perhaps this past week you have felt weary of the battle.
- When we are in good health, time seems to move all too quickly; but when life is difficult with physical pain and emotional suffering, it moves too slowly.
- Either way, we need a shepherd who stays with us until the end. In Psalm 23, verse 4 brings a change in perspective. Until now, the sheep has been boasting about the shepherd; now, the sheep turns to talk to the shepherd directly, “Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me...” (vs. 4)

Spring Pastures

Often as Spring approaches, the shepherd will take the sheep to distant Spring pastures. This entails long “drives” with the sheep moving along slowly, feeding as they go, working their way up the mountains behind the receding snow.

But as Autumn approaches, the shepherd and his sheep go back down into the valley. Winter arrives, and they must spend their winter in the valley where the ranch headquarters are.

During this time the flock are, for the most part, alone with the shepherd; they are under his personal attention and the bond between sheep and shepherd is strengthened.

There are many valleys in Israel. One that is particularly steep is “the valley of the shadow of death.” It has vultures by day and hyenas at night; it has narrow trails and high plateaus. Yet this is the place the Sheep get to know the shepherd. They might be in danger if they were alone, but with the Good Shepherd, there is nothing to fear.

David says, vs. 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”.

The valley of death is the one that leads all the way to heaven. We might fear this valley, but there is simply no way to get to the other side. This valley is actually a gift from God.

A Shadow is not to be Feared

Remember, a shadow is not to be feared. The shadow of a wolf cannot bite; the shadow of a sword draws no blood. Thus we read, “I shall fear no evil.” Yes, we are frightened by shadows, but we need not be. But the shadow is only fearful, when we mistake the shadow for the reality. Satan prowls about like a roaring lion seeking whom He may devour, but if you are Christ’s then Satan cannot harm you. He can roar but He cannot harm!

What if the sheep do not follow? At times he will take a young lamb, carry it on his shoulders – and sometimes if one of His sheep don’t follow He has to lovingly break his leg and carry it around.

Application

The Valley of the Shadow of Death is real. Death is only a shadow. It cannot harm us if we are His sheep.

- But sometimes our Good Shepherd **takes a child to heaven**, then the adults are more eager to follow.
- And if not a child, then a friend, a marriage partner.
- I have spoken to widows who cannot seem to adjust to the loneliness, the longing, the sense of abandonment. Eventually all of us will pass through the valley; despite our fears, we shall do so successfully because of these words, “You are with me.” This is the Old Testament equivalent to “I will never leave you nor forsake you...”

If we do not yet have the grace to pass through that valley, it shall be there for us when we need it. Dying grace is usually not given to us until we need it. The deepest valley sometimes has the most satisfying refreshment. Remember on the other side of the valley is the higher ground that leads to God.

The Rod and Staff

En route there are many dangers. “your rod and your staff they comfort me.” The rod was a symbol of authority.

The Rod (club): It was a huge club used in close combat and also thrown at wild beasts. Though it evoked fear, it also brought comfort. The rod that should bring us to our senses is the Word of God.

The Staff: The staff signified the tender guidance of the shepherd. If a sheep was about to eat poisonous grass or drink contaminated water, the shepherd would use the **crook** to bring the animal back on track. If the rod symbolizes the Word of God, the staff is symbolic of the Spirit of God. ***The Holy Spirit is our “Comforter” that One who is called along side of us to meet whatever spiritual need we might have.***

A shepherd who knows how to use both the rod and the staff, gives the sheep a feeling of security. Understandably David could say, “I will fear no evil.”

III. The Shepherd provides for the sheep, vs. 5, “*You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows*”.

Notice how far we have come: the Good Shepherd protects His sheep, but He also prepares for His sheep. Verse 5, “You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows...”

The shepherd has taken the sheep through the valley and they have now emerged on the distant hillside. Yes, the wild animals are there, but the sheep may safely graze, for they are in the presence of the shepherd. If a soldier eats a meal in the presence of his enemies, it is generally eaten very quickly. But sheep can eat leisurely in the presence of their enemies if the shepherd is beside them. There is a part of us that our enemies cannot touch.

Jonathan Edwards

Jonathan Edwards was, perhaps, America’s greatest theologian, a preacher whom God used during the days of the America’s first great awakening in the 1740’s. As pastor of a church in Northhampton, Massachusetts, he was involved in a controversy; the church was split; seeds of dissension were sown, rumors flew and tempers flared. At a business meeting, a vote of confidence was taken and Edwards was voted out of his church by about 230 to 30. **Years later one of his relatives confessed that he had started the dispute against Edwards out of jealousy.** Of course, that confession was too little, too late.

But how did Edwards handle this turn of events? His reputation was tarnished and his best friends turned against him. One of his friends described it this way, “His happiness in God was beyond the reach of his enemies.” He knew that his Shepherd had not left him.

And because of that attack of his enemies, God prepared a feast. He became a missionary to the Indians, and he had the most fruitful time of writing in his life.

Anointing My Head with Oil

“You anoint my head with oil.” Such oil was put on the head of the sheep as a repellent from insects. It is one of those special comforts the shepherd gives to his sheep. The sheep does not notice that he is in the presence of these pests, but the shepherd does and knows in advance what to do. Again, the more obedient the sheep, the easier it will be for sheep and shepherd.

“My cup overflows.” As a courtesy, the shepherd will sometimes put water in a bowl and let the sheep drink from a full cup. Where ever you are, if you have Christ you have everything. You are heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ!

IV. The Shepherd plans for the sheep, vs. 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*”.

Finally, the shepherd plans for the sheep. “Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.” Christ promised to go and prepare a place for us so that when He returns we can be with Him.

Sometimes it is hard to preach Psalm 23 aright, because it can be easily misunderstood to mean that we will have no real problems in life.

A shepherd takes care of his sheep, but sometimes the Good Shepherd appears to neglect His sheep; life is often cruel and harsh. Job, for example, might say that the Good Shepherd appears inaccessible and silent when His sheep suffer.

God’s goodness and mercy are that we know Christ. Anything beyond that is a bonus. God’s goodness or grace and His mercy will always follow us.

Goodness is God giving us what we don’t deserve.
Mercy is God not giving us what we do deserve.

Conclusion: This is what brings us hope. We not dwell here forever. One day God will wipe away all tears, and we will dwell with Him forever!