

## The Lord is My Shepherd

Psalm 23

Studies in the Psalms #24

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**W**'VE seen in the first twenty-two Psalms that in the early part of the Psalter we are praying mostly lament. And if I had to use a word to describe what “lament” is I’d use “disorientation.” These Psalms are full of disorientation because the world is not the way it ought to be. *The world is not the way it ought to be* so our families and friends say, “There is no salvation for him in God” (Ps. 3:2). *The world is not the way it ought to be* so it seems like God doesn’t care when “the wicked hotly pursue the poor” (Ps. 10:2). *The world is not the way it ought to be* and image-bearers of God say, “There is no God” (Ps. 14:1). *The world is not the way it ought to be* so we feel that God is absent from us. Some of us are in real need of a job. Some of us are in need of good friends. Some of us have physical, psychological, and emotion struggles. And these make us feel that God is absent from us: “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Ps. 22:1).

But at just the right moment we hear these words: **the LORD is my shepherd** (v. 1). Here is love. **He makes me lie down in green pastures** (v. 2). Here joy. **He leads me beside still waters** (v. 2). Here is gratitude. **Even**

**though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me** (v. 4). Here is confidence. **Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever** (v. 6). Here is hope. Despite all the disorientation in your life, as a child of God you can say with faith, hope, and love: **The LORD is my shepherd!** You can say this because by faith you are joined to Jesus, who said, “I am the good shepherd” (John 10:11). And he says of you, “The sheep follow [me], for they know his voice” (John 10:4). He says to us, “I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture” (John 10:9). **The Lord Jesus is my shepherd!**

### **His Provision (vv. 1–3)**

Your life may feel disoriented, but I want you know your shepherd’s *provision* in verses 1–3. Because **the LORD is my shepherd I shall not want** (v. 1), in other words, because I have every spiritual blessing in Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:3) I have all that I need.

Reflect with me on how the good shepherd has provided for his flock. Immediately after the Exodus from Egypt, our forefathers wandered in the wilderness without any water. They forgot that their shepherd could provide for their needs. When they came to bitter waters they complained. But the

good shepherd told Moses to throw a tree into the water and it became sweet to drink. **The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want!** They came to a place where their shepherd provided twelve wells of water and seventy palm trees. They were given water to drink and a place to rest their weary souls. **The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want!** But they continued to complain, not remembering what their shepherd had provided before. They said at least in Egypt they had meat and bread to eat so why not go back? But the shepherd providing bread called “manna” to eat in the morning and meat to eat in the evening, so much, in fact, that they did not have to gather food on the Sabbath. **The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want!** When there was nothing to drink again, the good shepherd provided a rushing river from a rock in the desert. **The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want!** After Moses died and Joshua took leadership the good shepherd provided the land of Canaan that “flowed with milk and honey.” **The LORD is my shepherd...He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters** (v. 2). He provided animals to raise, rain for crops, streams to irrigate, land to harvest, and forests to mill. It was so plentiful that every seventh year they could have an entire year of Sabbath rest. **The LORD is my shepherd...he restores my soul** (v. 3).

What a shepherd that God was for those ancient people, amen? And he is *your* shepherd! Cling to his promise: **The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want!** If he provided for so many of his children for so many hundreds and thousands of years, do you not think he can provide for you? Think about that. As your loving shepherd he provides for you each and every day. Look at he *has* already given you in his undeserved mercy in Christ, giving you exactly what you need! **The LORD *Jesus* is my shepherd; I shall not want! The LORD *Jesus* is my shepherd...he makes me lie down in green pastures! The LORD *Jesus* is my shepherd...He leads me beside still waters! The LORD *Jesus* is my shepherd...He restores me soul! The LORD *Jesus* is my shepherd...He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.**

### **His Protection (v. 4)**

Children, how come every time there is a petting zoo, there are sheep? The answer is that sheep are timid and weak. They're perfect for lots of kids in a small area because they will freeze in fear and let you pet them! We're no different as Jesus' sheep. We live in a world that is full of ravenous wolves. And we get afraid spiritually. Your life may feel disoriented, but I want you know your shepherd's *protection* in verse 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.**

What biblical story illustrates the shepherd's protection of his sheep more than any other? The Great Shepherd protected his flock like no other time in history in the Exodus. He brought his sheep out of Egypt and into the wilderness to save them. But the Pharaoh hardened his heart and commanded his armies to pursue and kill them. Would the Lord protect his flock? Had he led them out to die in the desert? There they were in the midst of **the valley of the shadow of death**. And there he protected. With his **staff** he led his sheep through the Red Sea on dry ground. With his **rod** he stood between Pharaoh's army and his sheep until they crossed; then he used that **rod** to destroy Pharaoh's army in the Red Sea.

What a mighty shepherd Israel had in those days! What a mighty shepherd *you* have! Amen? Beloved, **the valley of the shadow of death** comes in many shapes and sizes. Some of us may be afraid of the day we lie on our deathbed. Some of us fear the day when our spouse will be called home to the Lord. Fear not! **The LORD is my shepherd...even though I—or someone I love—walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me.** Do you fear the ongoing temptation of

the Devil when you walk out of here? You're safe here but when you're alone you can't control yourself? When you walk down that dark valley of temptation and you hear the Devil's voice echoing off the walls, "you're no child of God; you can't resist me," cry out in confidence, **The LORD is my shepherd...I will fear no evil**; cry out for his precious presence, **The LORD is my shepherd...for you are with me**; cry out for his help against the Devil and your sins, **The LORD is my shepherd...your rod...comfort[s] me**; cry out for his guidance away from temptation, **The LORD is my shepherd...your staff...comfort[s] me**.

Receive the comfort of your shepherd's protection today because note that while we **walk[ing] through the valley of the shadow of death** that we say **I will fear no evil**. It's in the disorientation that we know **you are with me**. It's when we are assaulted that we say **your rod and your staff, they comfort me. The LORD is my shepherd!**

### **His Presence (vv. 5–6)**

Your life may feel disoriented, but I want you know your shepherd's *presence* in verse 4, **for you are with me**, and especially in verses 5–6. Here is the beautiful thing about our good shepherd's presence for us today. Even though David committed adultery with Bathsheba and killed her husband

Uriah, even though the nation of Israel committed spiritual adultery with the false gods of the pagans, and even though we take the grace of God for granted and continue to bring him sorrow, the Lord promises to be with us.

The presence of the Lord is with us amidst all our foes: **You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies** (v. 5). The presence of the Lord blesses us: **you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows** (v. 5). The presence of the Lord is with us now: **Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life**. The presence of the Lord will be with us forever and ever: **I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever** (v. 6).

**The LORD is my shepherd**. “I am the good shepherd” (John 10:11). All these benefits of having the Lord as our shepherd and we being his sheep are found in and because of our Lord Jesus Christ:

**The LORD is my shepherd** because for me he became the sacrificial sheep.

**The LORD is my shepherd** because he lived a life in **want** so that I **shall not want**.

**The LORD is my shepherd** because he was tempted in the wilderness so that I might **lie down in green pastures**.

**The LORD is my shepherd** because he thirsted so that I might be led **beside still waters.**

**The LORD is my shepherd** because he was tormented in his soul on the cross that I might be **restore[d].**

**The LORD is my shepherd** because he lived righteously so that I might be led **in paths of righteousness.**

**The LORD is my shepherd** because he **walk[ed] through the valley of the shadow of death** that I might **fear no evil** because he is with me.

**The LORD is my shepherd** and he now **prepare[s]...a table before me in the presence of my enemies**, which is a foretaste of **dwel[ing] in the house of the LORD forever.**

**The LORD is my shepherd! Amen.**