

S. C. Sept. 4, 1977 Am. 10

"THE SHEPHERD PSALM"

Psalm 23

INTRODUCTION:

Perhaps all who are present today have committed to memory a few verses or a part of the 23rd Psalm. It has been read more than any other Scripture during funerals. It is desired by shut-ins. It has furnished more hope to those in the midst of trouble. And what a message it has for the needy soul.

There are few things in our Christian teaching that are better known to a greater number of people. The Psalmist was speaking to the simple people of his time. The setting is very important. It was a harsh land - rocky, small fields with little water and little vegetation. Just like our Lord talking in parables about seeds, roots, branches, trees, birds, and fish. So David is talking about things that the listeners could grasp. The familiar images in the minds of simple fishermen. It was easy to convey.

Men and women, boys and girls, have found these verses full of sweetness. For life, and for death. This is a jewel that brings hope to one in a desert place. These are welcome words.

The Holy Spirit has used these words to speak to us - to help us to come to child-like trust. To give us encouragement and comfort, to our hearts. The Holy Spirit has used these words to drive away griefs and doubts. To bring confidence. The joy of this Psalm is like Heavenly music. These words have been doing this for thousands of years and will continue until our Lord returns to this earth.



VIEWPOINT

By Joe L. Ingram
Executive Director-Treasurer

en the Psalm of the cross

Have you read Edward Ziegler's version of the Materialist's 23rd Psalm. It is expressive of the philosophy of our day. Read it carefully: "Science is my shepherd: I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down on foam rubber mattresses; he leadeth me beside the four-lane highways. He rejuvenateth my thyroid gland; he leadeth me in the paths of psychoanalysis for peace of mind's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of the iron curtain, I shall fear no communists, for thou art with me; thy radar screen and thy hydrogen bomb they comfort me. Thou preparest a banquet before me in the presence of the world's billion hungry people; thou anointest my head with home permanents; my alcoholic glass foameth over. Surely prosperity and pleasure shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the ShangriLa forever."
Now take your Bible and read Psalm 23. How thankful I am that **The Lord**

and not science—is my Shepherd. It's comforting to know that . . . "the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth fainteth not, neither is weary, there is no searching of his understanding. He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint" (Isa. 40:28-31).

Thank him today that he is your refuge and strength.

Schedule

- Aug. 25—New Retirement Program Orientation, Enid
- Aug. 26—Open House, Kingston Children's Home
- Aug. 28—Bowen Place Church, Tulsa
- Aug. 29—10 a.m.—New Retirement Program Orientation, Oklahoma City
- 7 p.m.—New Retirement Program Orientation, Ardmore
- Aug. 30—New Retirement Program Orientation, Muskogee
- Sept. 1—Mission Service Corp Meeting, Nashville

Shepherd, gave his life for God and suffered in John 10

shepherd re-appears in the chief shepherd who

provides, protects and

living shepherd -- keeping

location of this Psalm has

Personal Experiences

Note again, the Psalm is personal. David is now of mature years. He has

Just a Minute

A well-known minister of another denomination sat in his study one day when he heard a knock at the door. As he opened it he saw a businessman with whom he was slightly acquainted. The man had started at the bottom in his company and worked up to the presidency. But he was anxious, worried and distraught. He had been to see several physicians and one had suggested he visit a minister.

After talking with the man, the preacher said, "I am going to give you a prescription. For two weeks you must take this five times a day, when you first get up in the morning, after each meal and before you go to bed at night." The man agreed. The preacher wrote on a slip of paper: "Read Psalm 23."

The remarkable fact is that the man followed this advice and became completely well. God has provided the comfort and strength which we need in his Holy Word. But it is up to us to use it and receive the blessing which he has planned.

and leads us in a straight path to the New Testament.

Satisfaction of having come through and had found him to be adequate.

tatement of his utter dependance upon his is his personal experiences. This is for individuals. Now this concept of Psalm 100:3 - We are his - here is the faith of this man expressed.

So the nature of God is here portrayed. F. D. Myers said the 23rd Psalm is my creed. It is simple and yet it is lovely.

He has great love for the shepherd. Sweet fellowship has led him to assurance. Nothing in life can conquer him. He delights to claim this Shepherd and he often repeats the truth. This Psalm has appeared in our hymnbooks. It has been used as a lullabye for children. It has been used in our Church Choir and as a solo.

A young physician in Los Angeles lost his life, while saving another in a mountain climb. The young scientist had already made a name for himself in the field of medicine. But he had written in his well-worn Bible a note. Naming this Psalm as his favorite bit of Scripture. It had a message for him. These six verses, spoke to his heart.

A Lt. Comm. was killed instantly by a bomb dropped on a great ship, on which he was performing a surgical operation to save the life of a young seaman. He had just written a letter to his mother. Telling her of his love for and his joy in the 23rd Psalm. He said it meant much to him. The chaplain had read that Psalm that day on board the ship in the midst of war - in the midst of death. This Psalm has been unbelievably powerful and we ought to do our best

*to understand it's meaning. Healthy for us get "The Sheep Image" (Wandering sheep) also 53:6
Sheep has aptitude for getting lost they can be in a pleasant pasture until one finds a hole in the fence
less time than it takes to tell it they will all desert the grass & head for the hole, become one decided go astray
Not a sheep says lets go back! Create chaos!
Human's are like that desert the good & go wrong crowd - herd instinct.*

The author knows the needs of the sheep and the love and care of the Shepherd. The weak, the foolish, the thoughtless, the unprotected sheep need the shepherd.

I. THE LORD IS A SHEPHERD - V. (1)
Puts it all together.

Shepherd like sheep - Simple phrase says it all!

He is my shepherd. And this is a (personal) grip on God. Loving God personally as an individual. His personal care in his life, beyond the grave.

This really is the key to all the other verses, that the shepherd does. This is a rich treasure - since I have him, no want can be beyond possibility. By virtue of his office he will provide the needs which I have -- materially. He loves me as a good shepherd and I will never want for rest, or refreshment, or nourishment, or forgiveness, or restoration - I'll have comfort. He does not leave out anything in this world that a soul can possibly need.

So the Lord here is the personal name for our Father and our God. And of our Lord, Jesus Christ. He is the eternal one - the eternal I am. He is the same unchangeable one.

Shepherd, originally meant friend. Guide, companion, and God is that one to me. He is kind, loving, and devoted. The shepherd was equipped to protect and to guide. The shepherd used his hands, his eyes, his heart.

The word "my" is the transforming word. What a difference that makes. He knew the Shepherd as "my shepherd".

✓ I remember one morning, very early, a fine Christian woman was to have a serious operation. I went by the hospital and we had just a brief moment in the room together and I read the 23rd Psalm. She went through the operation and when coming too - you may guess what she was repeating. She was saying over and over again, "The Lord is my Shepherd".

The image of a shepherd was frequently used in the Old Testament to describe God. Jacob prayed to the Lord as the God who had shepherded him all of his life. Gen. 48:15. Ezekiel, the great prophet of the Exile, said - I, myself, will be the shepherd of my sheep. I will seek the lost. Ezekiel 34:15. *Mary, Hobbes, Jethro*

David, shepherd said ~

So here is a very rich symbol - my shepherd. That personal relationship with God. As the shepherd was related to the individuals in the flock.

This means that the 23rd Psalm was an experience. He relives those days.

Perhaps you heard the story where there was a party and an elderly clergyman and a famous actor were present. The hostess asked the actor to recite her favorite, 23rd Psalm. He recited it - he was trained, gifted, and the people applauded. Someone in the group asked the preacher to recite it. He said it with sincerity and expression of his personal faith. Everyone was deeply moved.

The actor explained the difference - I knew the Psalm but he knew the Shepherd.

Now the Shepherd longs for all of us to know him. He leads us, he keeps us from straying. And he will never, never, fail us. In our travels, in our programs - he is always there.

*Greatest need of every boy & girl here is a mother to guide them over rough places in life -
gives our shepherd to guide.*

✓ II. I SHALL NEVER (WANT) - V. 1.

Therefore, I can lack nothing. Deut. 2:7. Matt. 6:31.

Who tonight, can say - I shall not want. The man claims the Lord Jesus as Saviour and Shepherd.

any Shep who goes about things God's way can say this -

The man of the world cries out, I perish here with hunger.

Paul, Phil. 4:19, shouts - My God shall supply all your needs according to his riches in Glory by Christ Jesus. They that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing. And that means that they shall not want even down to some future day. They will never want for anything at all. In all of life and in all of eternity.

with this verse 23 Psa - word accurately in her memory but in her mistake there is a lesson, "The Lord is my shepherd, That's all we want" Have you worried Paul - We are rich - every need will be supplied moment by moment. It is part of his plan. This knowledge thrills us and yet it humbles us and challenges us.

Notice what the Shepherd provides. And the reason why you will not want.

V. 2 - He causes me to lie down in (green pastures) - he is in the field of tender grass. He is able not only to save but to cause us to rest in this good pasture land. The Shepherd knew where the good pasture land was and he worked to keep his sheep in this quiet, restful, refreshing place. And this gave the

sheep a feeling of security. He had plenty of good food to eat.

Did you ever have an innocent, lovable, wife to make a sheep lie down - let me save you the trouble - not like dog - no hungry sheep will lie down - only when filled -

This means, that people, who are in a positive relationship to God, can expect (a positive action) from God on their behalf. The green pastures, the patches of green grass - only a shepherd could cause the sheep to feed there. The sheep would never find it by themselves.

Green Pastures Family Prayer, Bible Reading, worship in Sanctuary

The idea of maketh here seems to have an idea of force - that a good shepherd forces the sheep to rest at times. Some are miserable unless we are going somewhere or doing something all the time. What we call burning the candle at both ends. And many people do this - they never keep a Sabbath or have any time for worship. And this is exactly what the shepherd forces his sheep to do - to rest. Dr.

Charles Allen said that he was counselling a nervous and worried picky man. This man had material success but somehow he found inward peace and happiness were hard

to come by. He prescribed for him, the 23rd Psalm. He said I want you to read it (5 times a day for 7 days). I insist now that you take this prescription - read it the first thing when you awaken in the morning. Read it carefully, and prayerfully, immediately after breakfast. Also immediately after lunch. Again after dinner. And finally the last thing before you go to bed. At the end of just one week, I promised that things would be different for him - Dr. Allen said. And there is nothing that will give you the security and the rest if you will let him to cause you to lie down and rest.

V-2. The waters are calm. The [still waters] He tenderly has led the sheep to good food. And now he leads them to cool refreshing water - peaceful water. You know Jesus said, ye that cometh to me shall never hunger. And he that believeth on me, shall never thirst.

(John 10:28) - My sheep shall never perish and neither shall they be plucked out of my hand.

The water supply was scarce - but the shepherd knew where the springs were available. And the sheep followed his voice.

Eze. 34:11-12 - Agnes Winter tells of a story during the 1st World War. A Turkish soldier tried to drive away a flock of sheep, while their shepherd was sleeping, on a hillside near Jerusalem. The shepherd aroused and saw his sheep being driven off. He could not hope to get them back single-handedly - he put his hand to his mouth and gave his own peculiar call to gather his sheep. The sheep heard - they turned and rushed down one side of the hillside and up the other - and it was impossible for the soldier to stop them. And the shepherd escaped with his sheep, to a place of safety. Now this is just what Jesus said. My sheep (hear my voice.)

V-3. He restoreth my soul. You pull the curtain aside from David's soul in Psalm 51:32 and you see him as a sinner. And it is an awful condition. How can he ever come back to the place of usefulness. What could help his sinful heart. What could make him change again. He now sings again - he restoreth my soul. *contentment - tired, discouraged, I don't have to stay that way.*

The Hebrew word here translated soul - has a wide range of meaning. It is used primarily to refer to a person's life. It refers to human life. To physical aspects. And he spoke of his soul being restored. He was thinking about God's blessings in his life. He had been threatened with death and here was God that kept his promises. Who restored him in the daily process of things - to recognize that his Lord was over him every moment of his existence.

In Southern France a tract of land was once a desert. Divided from it was a range of limestone hills. And beyond that the river Durance. A channel was cut through the hill. The water, with fertilizing mud, was turned into the desert. Today the wilderness blooms as the rose.

MacDowell, the composer - worked and jotted down little melodies. He would often fling the scraps of paper into a wastebasket. Sometimes his wife would rescue these scraps of paper. One scrap became "To A Wild Rose". A simple song - beloved by all. How many times our Lord finds discarded souls and touching them with his love gives them gladness, and helps them in the world. He restoreth my soul. He can restore even discarded things. The most depraved thing - there is a possibility of restoration. The stress of the times in which we live. The lost fervor of spiritual experiences.

A speaker at a Penitentiary said, I asked myself the question, what has God's

Word to offer that will meet the needs of these men, who have committed crimes.
Stained by every kind of sin and crime, in despair, he found the answer in the
23rd Psalm. And he spoke to those men about the possibility of restoration.

I read the story of a photographer. He was asked to restore an old picture.
It was all faded and you could not distinguish the features. He poured over it
a certain solution. Then he subjected it to an intense heat. The image was
restored. A face of beauty and sweetness that was blurred - came back that had
been kept from vision. If a picture can be restored - a likeness that seemed
hopelessly lost. How much more can the Heavenly Father - take the sin out of your
life and restore you.

Indruch De Great - built palace "SANS SOWCI" meaning "without care". excluded Europe care, worry, & Peace. All mankind is seeking to Sans Sowci - Peace can be found in Christ who restores, changes, reconciles, sin estranged us from God, marred our souls, troubled our conscience - (San Susil)

Moody went to hold a meeting in Scotland. At the noon meeting he preached
a sermon on the 23rd Psalm. Later, a man at church, who had not attended the
meeting - but he was on the porch. And he heard the message and later he was
saved because he could not get away from the message, Jesus said if there were ¹⁰⁰~~99~~
- and one sheep should be lost from the fold. That Jesus would go out and seek
that one. *Mat 18:12 He to Mt & seek sheep that is lost - sub 100 - 1*

V-3. The (paths of righteousness) for his name sake. This means that he leads,
he guides, he directs. Then the Shepherd has a definite plan and a blue print.
Now this is a strong word here - the Shepherd knew that it was necessary to have
the sheep take a certain course if they were going to arrive at a chosen place.
His sheep go the right way - This takes much of the stress out of living.

Now (this) is what the shepherd can give you - a sense of direction. And he
could enable the flock to be on the right path to lead them to the water and the
green pastures. And they would not have to wander around.

He took over and guided according to a plan and an appointed way.

Now David knew that life would not entirely rest on soft living. Life had a struggle. He knew that there were serious matters in his life. There were rough gullies and rocky places.

John 10:4 - He goeth before them and the sheep would follow him. He will lead them in the way that is right.

Now the pledge here is that he is going to do this is for his ²² Name Sake²². Because of his name - because of his honor. He will lead you in this path of righteousness.

Now the name of the person in the Bible was significant. It had a meaning - it expressed the nature of the person. For example, (God's name) - spoke of his personality. The Ten Commandments. It warned against the meaningless use of God's name. Now God is portrayed as one who lives up to his promise. And he is a God of action. He has chosen the way and he will lead the ones. The sheep is not to go his own selfish way but he is to trust God. The way may seem difficult, painful. But here is a constant leader - here is one that is going to be with him.

V-4 The (valley of the shadow) of death. Now they must pass through dangerous mountains, where it is dark. Steep cliffs. I have been down in some valleys - through the mountains that have deep shadows even at noon day. Now this was not a pleasant journey. Cruel men, hungry beasts, careless adventure, fear. David remembered these many times that he had dared to lead his sheep through.

Firm conviction The Shepherd will take him through the valley.

But my shepherd goes through the dangerous places. The narrow places. The shadow of death - deep darkness. It can mean death. But here it means shadow. I think describing any serious, trying, or testing time.

Some of the experiences are darker - some are more desperate. He pictures a heart here when danger and anguish overwhelms us.

How can one stand up under these terrible times of testing. This shadow of death means literally deep shadows. He may not be thinking about the hour of death down the road. But he is picturing these experiences - sorrow, distress, pain, anguish, broken hearts. Move along under a heavy load.

The Good Shepherd knows and understands. He is our faithful shepherd. And he will lead you through those experiences. Some suffering must come. Some days the sun does not shine for us. Sorrows will have their place in our lives. There will be hours of grief. There will be disease and disappointments and sorrows. There will be active opposition by Satan. We are but human and frail.

How may I count on strength to endure to the end. When the heart is breaking - when the dark shadows gather, when the sun refuses to shine. When my tears flow as a torrent. Just what am I to do.

David who had an experience - just as normal. Share of sorrows. Tells us the answer here.

I will fear no evil He affirms in triumph that thou art with me.

Without fear. Darkness, robberies, thiefs, unseen pits. All of these will

be harmless now. The shepherd is there to aid the Christian and the valley will lead you out into the sunlight and the sunrise of tomorrow.

X There is a story of an ancient city. To get to it you had to go through a long dark, narrow tunnel. But when one dared to go all the way he emerged in the entrance of a beautiful palace. With lovely colors in the sunlight.

I think this was why Billy Sunday used to say, when the train goes into the tunnel - don't throw away your ticket.

What shall we say about the hour of death. Is that experience excluded in this verse. Certainly in that hour - as in all other experiences - he is with us. He fills the dark hours of suffering with light. Our Saviour has conquered death and he comes to welcome us into the Gloryland. He comes back to visit John on the Isle of Patmos and said to him "fear not". I am the first and the last. I am he that liveth and was dead. And behold, I am alive forever more. And have the keys of death. He says, don't be afraid of life - for I have lived. Don't be afraid of death - for I have died. Don't be afraid of eternity - for I hold the keys to all the mansions over there.

We could dwell right here for a great message from God's word. The valley of temptation - the deep shadow of suffering. Those horrible disappointments that come. Our cherished hopes that vanish. Like a wounded bird. The loneliness when loved ones are gone, far away. The valley of frustrations when you have done your best, in some noble task and yet people say that you have failed. What heavy tread you carry. Time and time again - we go into this deep shadow.

We just can't deny the valley. But we can thank God that there is a light in the valley. We need a light when the fog comes in. And when darkness comes in. We need the 23rd Psalm - and need to read it again.

X ✓ A certain Indian tribe - before a young man could become a brave - he was required to spend a night alone and unarmed in the forest. With the vicious animals roaming about. The time came for the son of the chief to endure this ordeal. Through the night, the animals stalked him - they were hungry. The young man was fearful because he had to be unarmed and alone. But remembering the purpose of the ordeal - he endured. And when the dawn was breaking and the animals were leaving and going back to their places - the young Indian boy looked behind him to see his father quietly standing behind him near by. An arrow set in his bow. This is what the Psalmist is saying. God does not exempt us from the trials of life but unseen by us, God keeps watch above his own.

Shepherd's equipment - They were all he needed

Thy (rod and thy staff) - they comfort me. V. (4). You are called upon to walk in the valley. But here in his hand is his rod and the shepherd's staff. God did not will that Job should suffer. However, he committed Satan to subject him to all sorts of trial. It was a dark path.

But it says the rod and staff comfort. This is what Isaiah said - comfort ye, comfort ye my people. The shepherd wants to bring comfort to needy hearts.

We are constantly in need of comfort which God's gives. In the mountain, the rod was a special club or weapon. The shepherd carried it with him for extra power over the folds. He needed to be armed against the wicked animals that would come. *joy to know you are protected -*

The staff, the crook, was used to keep the sheep in line. It was used to count them when they came into the fold. It was used to pull them out of a deep pit or hole. It was used to chastise them when necessary. *Some people can't stand to be corrected & are hard to live with.*

V-5 A (Banquet table) Thou prepared a table. He now uses an image that will have human values. You are going to be a guest of a shepherd. Here you are going to be a guest of Jehovah. Here is the host that loves the sheep. And God is referred to as a host. Here is a table. And the one who comes to this table must have clean hands and a pure heart. And one comes to God's table - must come as an act of free and open acceptance, on his part. *Table is laden, all around as wolves licking their chops - sheep say don't bother me, can't you see I'm busy!*

In the (presence of enemies) - V. 5. As personal as his faith was - he was aware that he needed some inner healing. That God would accept him in plain view of the enemies of this world. This had been arranged with loving care. And enemies may be on every hand but here is ample provision even though he has foes all about him. This is proof that the valley is not a forsaken place.

The enemy of sickness, death, misfortune, friends may forsake, trouble may come - but here is the shepherd providing a table.

V-5. (Anoints my head) This was a custom in Bible times - it was part of the worship service in the Temple. The King's head was always anointed at *his inauguration*. This was a symbol of God's blessing. And so the people made much of anointing with oil. To honor and to consecrate. *Wool ripped at rips, injuries healing poured in by the Lord*

My cup overflows. Here is the abundance. The Psalmist lived to see it over-flow. And this is a supply that is unlimited. He cannot begin to

estimate the wealth that has been lavished upon him.

The poem - The King of Love My Shepherd Is
 Who goodness fails never
 I nothing lack if I am his
 And he is mine forever.

confidence stated - Surely Surely Surely - (3 times)

V+6. This has to do with the Lord's house. (Surely goodness and mercy) shall follow me. He was conscious of God's faithfulness. That the goodness and the mercy are the qualities of God. Mercy has to do with covenant love. This is to say the enabling power of God - Psalm 5:7 expresses it. The rich blessings. That this pursues me - never leaves me. This heavenly escort will follow me all the way. Now these are two things about God in action. The eternal God is they refuge and underneath are the everlasting arms.

*Not mean
 Tag Along
 But overtakes
 I Bless Him
 as long as I live.*

All the days of my life - to an eternal life. This means forever. For the length of days. *Picture - old shepherd in sheep fold makes secure closing door
 2 things every man needs to learn how to live & die.*

Dwell in the house of the Lord. Psalm 26:6-8. The glory of God. As in the Temple. God dwelt with them. The glory of God is manifested in Jesus Christ.

A doctor asked a minister once to go with him to a woman's house - who was very low. They went at the moment of her death. The doctor said friends have done all they can do. I will go in and make her comfortable and I want you to go in and talk to her. The minister went in, and taking her hand, asked her if all was well with her soul. She indicated she was happy in the Lord. She whispered, I am going through the valley.

Jan. 13: 2021

The Minister asked -
"Do you have any other questions?"

They were for his work.

The physician of Mountain took some together.

The doctor said - "It has been a year to me to be with you."

Working. I have been through to make something in

years before "asked the Minister?"

and what is best "asked the Minister?"

"I have seen both when I was at the same time

you are in the same - go with this Christian

has ever, and he, but in common from the other

side who took them up. The women was not

them to see what through the valley."