

THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD! -- Psalm 23

Funeral Message For Arnold W. Vandenberg

Officiating: Pastor Richard P. Carlson

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There is one psalm that Arnie memorized. When it was quoted in church, he liked to say it along me. This beloved psalm for Arnold is Psalm 23. Arnold had a total commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ. He was private about his faith for the most part, even as he was private about sharing things about himself personally. But one thing is certain. When I gave an invitation for people to be saved, Arnie often raised his own hand again and again. He was already saved; he knew Jesus, but he felt like he could never recommit his life to God enough. He deeply loved the Lord. I count it a deep and precious honor, Connie, for you to have given this privilege to me to preach your wonderful husband's funeral. Both of you mean the world to me and to our church. We will miss Arnie so much, but he has preceded us to glory where today he is absent from the body, and forever present with the Lord. As I come today to bring God's comfort to your hearts, Connie and family, I come with Arnie's only memorized Psalm, Psalm 23, perhaps the only psalm that many of us know by heart. If you have memorized it like Arnold did, say it along with me.

“The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures. He leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul. He leadeth 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 Thou art with me. Thy rod and Thy staff, they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: Thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth 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.”

If you knew Arnold very well, you know that he bore up under intense pain with a deep will to keep on living, even when his body was almost entirely shutting down. Arnie had a deep inner contentment. Those of you who knew Arnold as his brother or sister in Jesus, you know where his contentment came from. The key to contentment for sheep like Arnold W. Vandenberg, and for sheep like each of us as believers, is having a shepherd like Jesus. Arnie knew Jesus as **(1) the Good Shepherd of the sheep**, John 10: 11, the Shepherd who laid down His life for His sheep. Arnie knew Jesus as **(2) the Chief Shepherd of the sheep** who is coming again to receive us again to Himself. (I Peter 5: 4) Arnie knew Jesus, I Peter 2: 25 as **(3) the Shepherd and Bishop of his soul**, who came after Arnold, as He comes

after us all, when we go astray. Arnie also knew Jesus as **(4) the Great Shepherd of the sheep,** Hebrews 13: 20 who shed His precious blood of the everlasting covenant for us all. But if Arnold were here today to tell you why he was content in his walk with the Lord before he died, it is because Arnold most of all said, **(5) The Lord is my Shepherd.** Today, Arnie's question for you all and my question for you is, "Can you honestly say, "The Lord Jesus Christ is my Shepherd?" Today, I can say what Arnie and Connie have said for many years, "The Good, Great, Chief, Shepherd and Bishop of our souls is my Shepherd."

Life without Jesus is a wilderness of want, want, want. Some people say, "The Lord is my Savior, but they fail to let the Lord Jesus shepherd them. They cannot honestly say, "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want." It is possible to know Jesus as Savior and still miss out on the joy of relaxing in the confidence that He brings. You can come to Jesus as Savior and still live in discontent and want. In 1915, a hymn writer named Harry Dixon Loes wrote a song that explains the missing secret available in Jesus. The song goes, "Friends all around me are trying to find, what the heart yearns for, by sin undermined; I have the secret, I know where 'tis found; Only true pleasures in Jesus abound. All that I want is in Jesus, He satisfies, joy He supplies; Life would be worthless without Him, all things in Jesus I find." If you have Jesus as your Savior and Shepherd, you will not want. That's the focus of my funeral message today. What does it mean and what did it mean to Arnie to say, "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want?" There are 12 basic wants of life: Jesus supplies them all.

I SHALL NOT WANT FOR REST. (1) Why? "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures." Imagine how similar to sheep we are. Sheep are directed by their shepherd to rest in enemy territory where there are coyotes, wolves, mountain lions, grizzlies, and other enemies. In our final moments of life, when we come to the end of our earthly days, as Arnie just did last Wednesday, at the Intermountain Medical Center in Salt Lake City, God often takes His sheep Home, while we are resting and lying down. God took Arnie Home while he was resting. His doctor told Connie and the family that it would not be long if the respirator was discontinued. The decision was made that Arnie could not live without the respirator, and that it was hurting him badly. The family decision was made to release Arnold to go Home to Jesus. Three minutes later, Connie told me Arnie took his final breaths. Arnie was ready to go. He was resting in the Lord. He was resting even in the face of death. God gives us rest in our struggles, in our trials, in our afflictions, in our battles, and finally, He gives us rest in our final graduation. He sends His angels to carry us Home to Him when, as His sheep, our earthly life ebbs away and we breathe our last.

I SHALL NOT WANT FOR REFRESHMENT. (2) Why? “He leadeth me beside the still waters.” Sorrow, affliction, heartache, and heartbreak break the speed limits in all of our little streams of life. Our lives are often like a muddy, flooding spring run-off, on the rampage. Sheep will not drink from a flooding, raging stream. They panic and stand frozen in place, and cannot move. God knows us all through and through. He knows just what we need. Bewilderment and confusion swirl around us like whirlpools, but Jesus leads us to cool, clear, quiet, still water to drink. In the face of wild anxiety, His living water refreshes our souls.

I SHALL NOT WANT FOR RESTORATION. (3) Why? “He restoreth my soul.” Sheep are always sheep and they are forever straying. Every one of us have the same tendency, even after we repent, believe and receive Jesus. Isaiah 53: 6 tells us “All we, like sheep have gone astray.” We insist on our own way. Jesus is forever coming after us as lost sheep to bring us back to His fold of love. He often picks us up and carries us out of our desperate situations on His shoulders. Discouraged and depressed, we lose perspective. We even walk away from His love. God knows what we need. He disciplines us with His rod and restores us with His staff, to stay close to His side.

I SHALL NOT WANT FOR GUIDANCE. (4) Why? “He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His Name’s sake.” Isaiah 30: 20, 21 declares, “And though the Lord give you the bread of adversity, and the water of affliction, yet shall He, your Teacher no longer hide Himself, but your eyes will behold your Teacher, and your ears will hear a word behind you, saying, “This is the way, walk in it, whenever you turn to the right or to the left.” Jesus is our GPS, our Guide.

I SHALL NOT WANT FOR COURAGE. (5) Why? “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me.” A sheep isn’t a fighter that can take on a bear, a wolf or a lion. Sheep only fight each other, not the enemy. With all the courage in the world, a sheep is still helpless in the face of a bear, a lion or a wolf. The courage the Lord gives us as our Shepherd is not to fight, but to trust Him and not be afraid. Why? It is because He is with us. The courage He gives us is not to fight, but to trust Him. He gave Arnie courage all his life and at the end. He wants to do the same for you. God says to us, “Be not afraid, I go before you always, Come follow me, and I will give you rest.”

I SHALL NOT WANT FOR COMFORT. (6) “Thy rod and Thy staff, they comfort me.” When we stray and God comes to find us...when we repent of our disobedience and His rod of discipline brings us to true sorrow for sin, then the joy

of His comfort comes as He bears us in His arms, dries our tears, comforts us with His love and carries us on His shoulders. It is His staff that reaches over the cliffs where we are precariously hanging on, and in the crook of His staff, He pulls us out of our dilemma, out of the quicksand. He lifts up our head when we faint with exhaustion. Oh, the comfort of His rod and staff! When the Lord finds us at the edge of a cliff, in life's quicksand, when He brings us home, there is joy in heaven. There's more joy in heaven over the Lord finding one lost sheep than there is over 99 just persons who need no repentance. In 1868, Elizabeth Clephane wrote words of heaven's celebration, when the Lord finally comes back to His fold carrying His lost sheep. "But all through the mountains, thunder-riven, And up from the rocky steep, There arose a glad cry from the gates of Heaven, "Rejoice, I have found my sheep. And the angels echo around the throne, Rejoice, for the Lord brings back His own. Rejoice, rejoice, rejoice! For the Lord brings back His own.

I SHALL NOT WANT FOR SUPPLY. (7) Why? "Thou preparest a table before me..." How often God brings us money out of nowhere, help out of the shadows, hope out of our grief, and a way where there seems to be no way? Arnie was close to death so often in the last few years, but it wasn't supper time in Heaven for him yet until last Wednesday. God kept turning things around and giving Arnie another season of living for Him, with a new bundle of His supplies. The hymn writer wrote, "My God shall supply, supply your every need. To rush about and worry so, is unbelief indeed. The banks of earth may close, Not so the bank of heaven. According to His riches in glory, by Christ Jesus, your need shall be given."

I SHALL NOT WANT FOR PROTECTION. (8) Why? Notice our fully supplied table is prepared where? It is "in the presence of mine enemies." All of God's supply comes when? It comes as our enemy, the devil is looking on, licking his chops, wanting to consume us, but he cannot hurt us. Why? Our Shepherd is there. What the enemy means for evil, God turns around for good.

I SHALL NOT WANT FOR POWER. (9) Why? "Thou anointest my head with oil." As our Shepherd, God pours His anointing oil on our heads even as a shepherd anoints the head of a sheep who has fleas or other bugs in its wool on its head. We have in our Shepherd power and anointing for service. We aren't stalled dead on the tracks. I watched you Connie and family on Monday sit down with me to make the arrangements for Arnie's funeral. You still have the Lord's power.

I SHALL NOT WANT FOR JOY. (10) Why? "My cup runneth over." We all are sad without Jesus. But we sorrow not as those who have no hope. No, as the songwriter put it, "Joy is the flag flown high from the castle of my heart, when the

King is in residence there.” He gives us beauty for ashes and the oil of joy instead of the spirit of fainting. And even as we made plans together for this funeral, Connie, God gave us moments of pure joy. My cup runneth over.

I SHALL NOT WANT FOR GOODNESS AND MERCY. (11) Why? “Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life.” Living in Sweetwater County allows many of us to see not only huge herds of sheep, but their protectors, sheepdogs, English Shepherds, Blue Healers, and the most ominous of all, Large White Pyrenees dogs. No one is safe getting close to these flocks of 2000 -2500 sheep. God has two sheepdogs, His Word and His Holy Spirit inside us.” These two witnesses and protectors are far more protection for us than a shepherd’s sheep dogs. God’s Word and His Spirit are our “Goodness and Mercy.” They are our rear guard beyond belief and they followed Arnie all the way Home to Glory.

I SHALL NOT WANT FOREVER. (12) Why? “And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.” Arnold W. Vandenberg has gone ahead of us--Home to Glory. Arnie entered Glory Land where we’ll never grow old. In the Book of Revelation, Revelation 21: 4 declares, “And He, our good, great, chief shepherd, the Bishop of our souls, Arnie’s Shepherd, He shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.” If Jesus is your shepherd, as He is Arnie and Connie’s Shepherd, you shall not want forever.

Let’s bow our heads. For those of you who want to follow the Shepherd Arnie did, it only takes a simple asking in repentance, Just pray, “Jesus, I am a sinner and I need You to come into my heart. I ask you to forgive me and save me and be my very own everlasting Shepherd.” How many of you are willing today to repent, believe and receive Jesus into your lives to become your Shepherd? Let’s pray. Let’s bow for the benediction: “And now, forasmuch as it has pleased our heavenly Father, in His wise providence to take unto Himself our beloved Arnold W. Vandenberg, therefore we commit His body to the ground, earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust, looking for the blessed Hope and the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who shall change the body of our humiliation and fashion it anew in the likeness of His own body of Glory, according to the working of His mighty power wherewith He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself. Now, “The Lord bless you and keep you, the Lord make His face to shine upon you, and be gracious unto you; the Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace, comfort and hope until we awake as His sheep in His likeness, and the Day dawns and these shadows flee away. We ask these mercies in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, Amen.”

