

**Psalm 23: 1-3; “The Lord is My Shepherd”, A Sermon delivered by Pastor Paul
Rendall on May the 23rd, 2021 in the Morning Worship Service; the day
that Hannah Pfeifer was baptized, and brought into the church.**

As I thought of what I would like to preach to you today, on this day of Hannah’s baptism, I thought of this Psalm. This Psalm will be a good portion of God’s word for us to think upon because it shows us the care of our Lord Jesus over the souls of all His people. King David wrote this Psalm, and I believe that it was probably written in that transition time, from when he was a shepherd over his father’s flocks, to his being brought into the court of Saul and banqueted by the king after his slaying Goliath the Philistine. He was content to be a shepherd watching over sheep for his father in the country. He would eventually become a shepherd over God’s people Israel.

It says in Psalm 78, verse 70 – “God chose David His servant, and took him from following the ewes that had young He brought him, to shepherd Jacob his people, and Israel His inheritance.” “So he shepherded them according to the integrity of his heart, and guided them by the skillfulness of his hands.” That is – David was able to shepherd the people of Israel well, because the Lord was His shepherd. The question I bring before you at this time is – Is the Lord your Shepherd? If the Lord is your shepherd then you will be led and guided skillfully by His hands in the following ways.

1st of all – If the Lord is your Shepherd, you will be led into all the spiritual blessings of being saved from your lost condition.

“The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want.” David is saying that since the Lord was his Shepherd, he would not lack any good thing. In Psalm 84, verse 11, it says – “For the Lord God is a Sun and a Shield; the Lord will give grace and glory; no good thing will He withhold from those who walk uprightly.” When David says that the Lord is His Shepherd, and that He shall not want, he is not speaking primarily of earthly blessings, although God is the giver of every good earthly and material thing that we have in this life. But he is speaking, rather, of our spiritual needs, which are our greatest needs. David knew that all of his own spiritual needs would be tended to, because Christ the Good Shepherd, would care for him. David speaks of himself as a sheep under the Great Shepherd’s spiritual care.

Let me ask whether you see yourself this way this morning; as a person who needs to be cared for, by God, through Jesus Christ who is the Great Shepherd of the sheep? O, it is true that all of us were created by God. We were created by Him to be shepherded by Him. All of us were made for God’s good pleasure. But the Bible tells us, that all of us, before we are saved from our sins, before we come to faith in Christ, we want to do things our own way. And we can be quite stubborn and headstrong in God’s sight, in this regard. We continually wander away from doing God’s will. We do not want to consider the fact that God has expectations for our life. When we are growing up, and even when we are grown up, we may want to delve into many selfish and sinful things. And God knows that He cannot bless us in our pursuing those things.

In this sense, all people are like sheep, in that we have all have gone astray, as it says in Isaiah 53: 6 – “All we like sheep have gone astray, *and* we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” So, you see here that in order to be brought into the Lord’s fold, in order for your sins to all be forgiven, that the Great and Good Shepherd, our Lord Jesus Christ, had to do something to merit God’s favor being shown to you, the sinner; the wandering sheep. He would have to come into this world and and to suffer and die as a sacrifice for your sins. That was how great our sins are. This great salvation of all sinners who would believe in Jesus, is something that was planned for, by God the Father, from before the foundation of the world.

Listen to Hebrews chapter 12, verses 20 and 21 – “Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever.” “Amen.” You see, it was the plan of God the Father, from before the foundation of the world, to make a Covenant of Redemption with God the Son, to provide for people’s greatest need, their need to stop wandering away from Him, and to return to Him, so that He might bless them eternally. This was provided for in the Everlasting Covenant between the Father and the Son.

The blood of Jesus is the blood of the everlasting covenant. He who was God would become man. The redemption of all of the sins of everyone who would trust in Him for salvation, and the sins of everyone who could not save themselves because they died before they were born, or the sins of those who died too young to understand the gospel, or the sins of those who lived and died a mental invalid, and those persons who suffered from a disorder which would not let them understand the truth of the gospel; God would most surely provide for all of these in this great and blessed work of redemption.

Our Lord is a God of great covenant mercies and justice. All of those whom the Lord has determined to save, He shall most certainly save, for there is no uncertainty with God. These He has made provision for, through the sufferings of Great Shepherd of the sheep. They shall not want. But let us not think that the gift of salvation comes only to the weak and helpless, and those who cannot understand, or receive it for themselves. It also comes to some of those sheep who have been rebellious and willfully sinful and wayward. Christ has died for those who know themselves to be sinners of the worst sort. They would not come to Him and so He had to seek them out Himself.

Listen to Luke chapter 15, verse 1. “Then all the tax collectors and the sinners drew near to Jesus to hear Him.” “And the Pharisees and scribes complained, saying, ‘This Man receives sinners and eats with them.’” “So He spoke this parable to them, saying: ‘What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he loses one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after the one which is lost until he finds it?’” “And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders rejoicing.” “And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!’” “I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance.”

What I want to show you from these words is that in order to be Christ’s sheep, you must realize that you are lost and that the Lord Jesus must seek you out, in order to bring you into His fold of the universal Church. You may have grown up going to a good church, but perhaps you did not stay there. You may not have wanted to hear all of this salvation talk. You thought of yourself as a good person just as you are. You think that you have no need of God’s grace. Perhaps you have thought that the freedom to be yourself was more important than knowing God. But in the final analysis, this is not true. You must have a Shepherd to know God. You must have a Shepherd to have eternal life. And the Lord Jesus is the only Shepherd of God’s sheep.

Do you know that when God saves a sinner, that Christ is the One who is seeking you, even before you begin to seek Him? Yes it is true. If you are a saved sinner, praise be to the Lord, He did seek you, and He did find you, and when He found You, He lays you on His shoulders rejoicing, as a trophy of His grace. What great joy there is in heaven! What great joy in the hearts and minds of God’s saints here upon the earth as well! Certainly there is an appropriate response to all of what Christ has done for sinners in His dying for them at the cross. It is that when you believe in Him, you will follow Him. Jesus says in John 10: 27 and 28 – “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.” “I give them eternal life, and they shall

never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand.” In other words, because He is your Shepherd, He will keep your soul, as you learn from Him and follow Him in learning to do God’s will, to His glory.

2nd – If the Lord is your Shepherd, He will provide for all of your spiritual needs.

“He makes me to lie down in green pastures.” Once you have been found by Christ, He brings you into His fold and you begin to really partake of His green pastures. He would have you to be a strong and healthy Christian, spiritually speaking. You may not be given to reading the Bible, but now it is His intent and purpose that you read it and get to know it, and bed down in it, and feed upon the rich grasses of God’s word. The faithfulness of Christ is seen in His making you to lie down in green pastures. You may have never thought about the Bible as being God’s truth, or how much your soul needs to be fed and nourished with all the good truth of the word of God; but Christ opens your eyes to see it. He brings you to the place where you will lie down in these green pastures of His blessed word.

In the past, you may have fed your mind and heart on bad books, and nothing but worldly magazines. You may have done nothing but watch ridiculous and unprofitable television programs for years. But when you come to Christ, He makes you lie down in green pastures. He shows you the value of your abiding in His word and your grazing in His green fields. He teaches you to love the taste of the spiritual food which He gives to you. The Bible becomes the most precious of books to you. This is because you begin to see that its contents will fortify, strengthen, and nourish your soul. You see that it will be by means of reading the Bible that you will become spiritually strong and healthy, spiritually speaking. You realize that by regularly feeding in the gospels and the epistles, the law, and the prophets, and the wisdom literature of the Bible that you will become wise if you will meditate to do all that He commands you and rest upon all that He promises you.

Christ Himself will lead your mind and your heart into the truth of His word, and make you lie down in it. You will be comfortable lying there. You will find contentment lying there. You will not be satisfied with the books, the television programs, and the continual hankering after worldly pleasures that the world feeds on when they continually look at their phone and browse the internet for hours. No, if you have found rest for your soul in Christ, and you will now feed on the food which will truly satisfy. You will feed and be satisfied with God’s word. You will, if you are a true Christian, know the wonderful reality of Christ making you to lie down in these green pastures.

Further, He leads you beside the still waters. (Literally – The waters of rest) The person who has Christ for their Shepherd will find that He will lead them into the waters of rest and quietness, as it is in the original. These waters are the pure and cool waters of fellowship and communion with God. The Lord would have you to drink deeply of these and be satisfied. Isaiah 55: 1 says – “Ho!” “Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat.” And Psalm 42: 1 says – “As the deer pants for the water brooks, so pants my soul for You, O God, for the living God.” The Lord will lead you to those places where you will have time for rest and reflection, time for communion with Him; to the place where you will personally be refreshed and strengthened spiritually each day, because He has supplied your soul with the rivers of living water.

Paul tells Timothy in 1st Thessalonians 4: 11, to “make it his ambition to lead a quiet life, and to mind your own business.” What good advice this is. It is not God who is leading you into continual frantic activity and agitation of mind, soul, and heart every day. You may find yourself in that kind of situation, and you may still be in the center of God’s will for you, but you will still need to remember, in your mind, to get away; to have time alone with God, time where you can pray and let the word of God speak to your heart; time where you can share sweet communion and fellowship with God, whose Spirit lives in you, and works in you, in accordance with the

word. Take time to be holy, speak oft with thy Lord. Spend much time in secret with Jesus alone. By looking to Jesus, like Him thou shalt be; thy friends in thy conduct, His likeness shall see.

Remember the work of the Holy Spirit in your heart is to lead you beside the still waters in order to restore your soul. Sometimes your soul can be overwhelmed with cares and trials, and you need to be restored in your spiritual, emotional, mental, and physical strength. Sometimes the people that you thought would help you, when you are going through trials, are not there for you when you need them. Sometimes you slip back into unbelief; not believing that God is with you, or that He is for you, when He is simply testing your faith to see whether you will walk with Him more closely. Remember that the Lord is Your Shepherd. He will refresh and renew Your strength, as He sees that you need it. He will also test and prove Your faith. Hold fast to Him.

3rd – If Christ is your Shepherd, He will lead you on the paths of righteousness for His name's sake.

The paths of righteousness are listed for us here in the plural, as being more than one. Let me see if I can explain this to you. There are paths of righteousness which we as believers walk upon, which are related to the truth of the gospel and living a life of faith in the risen Christ. And then there are the paths which we walk upon, which are the walk of our obedience to God's word in relation to Christ's giving us daily supplies of grace. The walk of faith is your continual everyday relationship with Jesus Christ. And it is established by your trusting in Him for grace in the many situations that He leads you into, day by day. Because of Christ, you have died to sin, and you now live to righteousness. You have come to God by this new and living way that He has made for you, to know God and to walk with God.

Christ's righteousness and the merits of His blood being shed, are continually being pleaded for you at the throne of grace so that you can have access to Him in prayer concerning all of the situations in your life that you are going through. And in your prayers, you will want to plead with your Good Shepherd, that you might be changed and transformed so that you will no longer love any sin, and that you are fully intending to work with Him so that you will come to forsake any habits of sin that you might have, and that you will pursue living a righteous and holy life in the sight of the Father. When you pray in this holy way, you will be answered. Christ knows whether you sincerely want to be a righteous and holy person.

What a blessed reality is walking with Jesus. He walks with you, leading you on these paths of righteousness. You receive light and life in His name each and every day. As it says in Proverbs 4: 18 – “The path of the just is like the shining sun, that shines ever brighter unto the perfect day. So, every day His lovingkindnesses are new every morning. His faithfulness and His care over you sustain you in your journey through this life. Every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places is being imparted to you by Christ your Mediator. This is something that you should glory in. In Proverbs 8, verse 17, the pre-incarnate Christ tells us – “I love those who love me, and those who seek me diligently will find me.” “Riches and honor are with me, enduring riches and righteousness.” “My fruit is better than gold, yes, than fine gold, and my revenue than choice silver.” “I traverse the way of righteousness, in the midst of the paths of justice, that I may cause those who love me to inherit wealth, that I may fill their treasuries.”

So it is, that day by day, the living, risen Christ makes this path of righteousness the way of knowing life and peace in your doing what is right. Jeremiah 6: 16 says: “Stand in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, where the good way is, and walk in it; then you will find rest for your souls.” Does your soul find rest in Christ every day? It is true that the main thing that a Christian pursues in their living the Christian life is to be a righteous and holy person. But they do not pursue it in a legalistic way. They rest in Christ's finished work of righteousness in order that they themselves can learn to do what is right. His righteousness is perfect. Yours is not.

But you are “in” Him, and so you can pursue righteousness, become righteous and holy in His sight.

Does a Christian pursue righteousness simply based on their own determination to do right? No, they pursue it by remembering what Christ has done for them, and what He is doing for them by His grace. The Lord leads you in the paths of righteousness for His name’s sake. That is, He leads you into the right thing to do in every situation by reminding you that you are to live for His glory, and not your own. And so, He will lead you and work in you by His Spirit in such a way that you see that He is helping you to obey Him in a God-glorifying way. He causes this righteousness to come about in your life, because He is giving you this grace which leads to your obedience for His name’s sake. You then come to see that your obedience is a matter of honoring Him for all that He has done for you.

Think about the way that this truth is expressed in Psalm 85, verses 10-13. “Mercy and truth have met together; righteousness and peace have kissed.” “Truth shall spring out of the earth, and righteousness shall look down from heaven.” “Yes, the Lord will give what is good; and our land will yield its increase.” “Righteousness will go before Him, and shall make His footsteps our pathway.” Mercy and truth have met together in Christ our Good Shepherd. Righteousness and peace have kissed; that is, righteousness and peace are Personified here in Christ. They are Personified character qualities show affection to each other in the Person of Christ. He is the Lord our Righteousness, and He is the Prince of Peace. Both are perfectly fulfilled in Him, because He is the only One who has perfectly fulfilled God’s holy law

Therefore, the truth about Him, the uniqueness of His Person, and what He has accomplished by His Righteous life and sacrificial death, would spring out of the earth by the preaching of the apostles and their writing down the Holy Scriptures for all mankind to read. Righteousness which is Personified in Christ, would ascend to heaven and look down from heaven, and the Lord would give to us who needed a Savior, what is good. All that God gives to you is good because of Christ. Every land and country in which the hearts of many people receive Christ and His grace, will yield its increase. They will bear fruit to Him, to His glory.

Righteousness would go before Christ, in those who would be justified in Old Testament times; people who were looking for His 1st Coming, and the fulfillment of all righteousness in Him. People like Zacharias and Elizabeth who were righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. Men like Simeon who was just and devout and waiting for the consolation of Israel. Women like Ann who did not depart from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day, for she was looking for the redemption of Israel. And a man like John the Baptist who go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways, to give knowledge of salvation to His people by their remission of their sins, through the tender mercy of our God.

All of these people were righteous because they were looking to the 1st Advent of our Lord, and they recognized it in His righteous and holy life when they saw Him, when they listened to Him preach and teach, and when they saw the perfection of His righteous life, and His greatest desire was to come into the world to save sinners. These people and all righteous people made Christ’s steps their pathway as an example to us who would come later; to all of us sitting here this morning, that we would understand that to be righteous we must be conformed to His image and likeness. To be righteous we must believe in Him and follow Him in the way that He walked, spiritually speaking. The paths that He leads in, are the paths of righteousness which He established by His own righteousness. And He laid down His life, that we might too walk the same path, by faith in Him.