

The Psalms

Lesson 16: Psalm 23

-Open in Prayer

-Theme Verse for the whole series (have a different student read it each week):

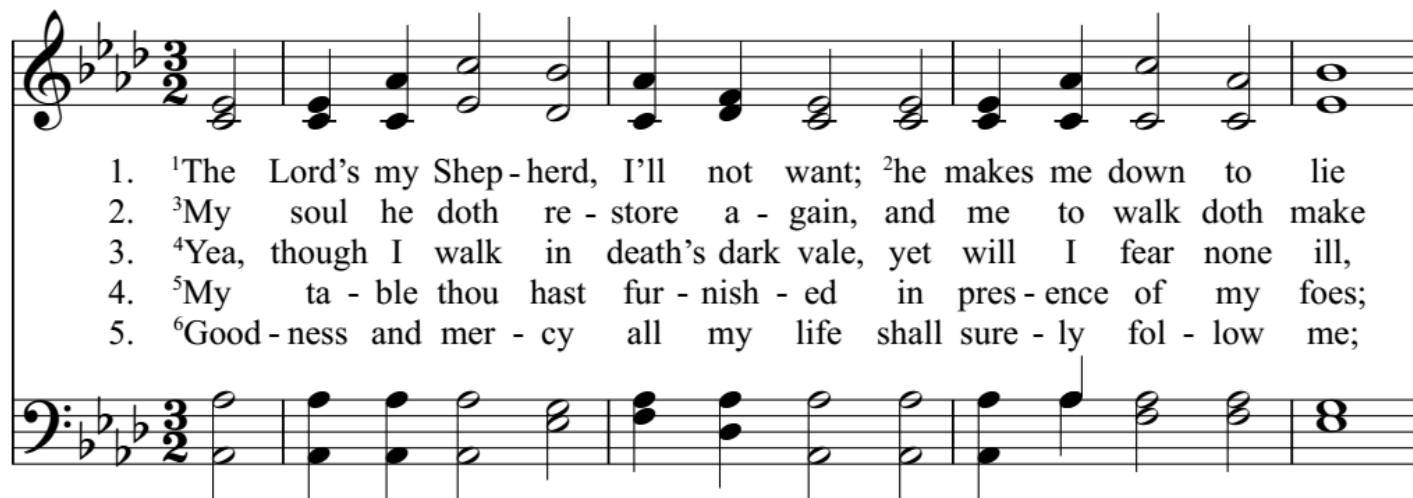
“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.” Colossians 3:16-17

-Sing the Psalm

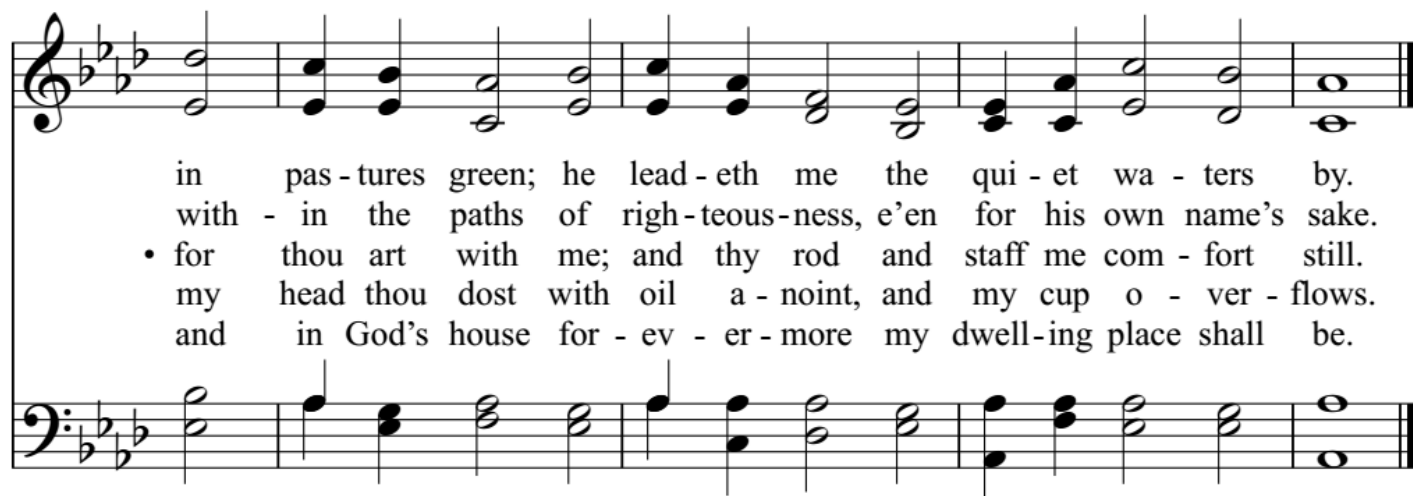
- Psalms are Songs - Meant to be Sung
- Psalms are Theology - Meant to Teach Us
- Not about sounding great, it's about glorifying God and meeting the Psalms where they are, how they were meant to be experienced.

23B

The Lord's My Shepherd



1. ¹The Lord's my Shep-herd, I'll not want; ²he makes me down to lie
 2. ³My soul he doth re-store a-gain, and me to walk doth make
 3. ⁴Yea, though I walk in death's dark vale, yet will I fear none ill,
 4. ⁵My ta-ble thou hast fur-nish-ed in pres-ence of my foes;
 5. ⁶Good-ness and mer-cy all my life shall sure-ly fol-low me;



in pas-tures green; he lead-eth me the qui-et wa-ters by.
 with-in the paths of righ-teous-ness, e'en for his own name's sake.
 • for thou art with me; and thy rod and staff me com-fort still.
 my head thou dost with oil a-noint, and my cup o-ver-flows.
 and in God's house for-ev-er-more my dwell-ing place shall be.

Francis Rous, William Mure, and others
 Scottish Psalter, 1650

EVAN C.M.
 William Havergal, 1846

-Read the Psalm

Psalm 23

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.

Green Pastures (1-3) - Dark Valleys (4) - Eternal Provision (5-6)

Green Pastures (1-3)

- **What is a shepherd? What does he do for the sheep?**
 - A shepherd leads, feeds, protects, and cares for his sheep. He keeps them safe, finds good pasture, and rescues them when they stray.
 - Key point here: sheep can't take care of themselves. Domesticated sheep, the kind that shepherds keep are really not capable of surviving in the wild anymore.
 - **Why do you think our culture tells us we need to be independent and self-sufficient, when the psalm starts by saying we're like sheep who can't care for ourselves?**
 - **Why is the Lord being your shepherd a statement that should bring comfort?**
 - Because He is the Good Shepherd. ¹¹"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. ¹²He 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. ¹³He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. ¹⁴I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, ¹⁵just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep."
 - It means you are in the hands of someone who will take care of you and who has the power to do so completely.
- **For a sheep what does green pastures and still waters mean? What is the significance of this imagery?**
 - Green pastures mean nourishment and rest; still waters mean peace and refreshment. It shows that God gives His people what they need for strength and spiritual life.
 - Sheep generally only lie down when they feel safe.
 - **If you were explaining to a friend what "green pastures" look like in real life (not just physically), what would you say? What do green pastures and still waters look like in the Christian life?**
 - Often not physical, but spiritual. Paul writes in Philippians 4 "I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. ¹² I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. ¹³ I can do all things through him who strengthens me." That is trusting in the shepherd who provides everything needful spiritually, even in the midst of physical trial and danger.
- **Why the transition in verse 3 from poetic imagery to more explicit commentary on God?**
 - The focus shifts from imagery to God's purpose and character.
- **What does it mean for God to restore your soul?**
 - It means God brings you back when you wander, renews you when you're weak.
 - Matthew Henry puts it starkly: "No creature will lose itself sooner than a sheep, so apt is it to go astray, and then so unapt to find the way back. The best saints are sensible of their proneness to go astray like lost sheep...he restores the soul; and, if he did not do so, they would wander endlessly and be undone."

- **What are paths of righteousness?**

- They are the right, godly ways to live. Paths that are in line with God's commands. God leads His people in holiness, truth, and obedience.
- Notice the immediate connection with restoration. God leads us to repentance from our wandering and that repentance, by necessity leads to good deeds. A restored soul seeks to walk in newness of life, to walk in paths of righteousness.
- **Why does it matter that it is for "His Name's sake?"**
 - Our salvation and growth show His glory, not our greatness.
 - Again, great comfort in this! It is not us who are doing this for our glory, it is God who has done it and is doing it for the sake of His Name and His Glory.

Dark Valleys (4)

- **What is a "valley of the shadow of death?"**

- Valleys were one of the most dangerous parts of the journey in the ancient world. Israel had steep, dark valleys. When you were at the bottom not only could you barely see to put one foot in front of the other, but you were hemmed in and totally vulnerable to bandits and predators and even flash floods.
- **So what would a valley be in the Christian life?**
 - It's any deep, dark, dangerous place in life, suffering, grief, fear, or even death itself. It's where things seem hopeless or scary, but God is still present.
 - **What are some "valleys" that teenagers today might walk through?**

- **Why won't David fear any evil even in that dark place?**

- Because God is with him. God's presence drives out fear.
- 2 Cor. 5 "[6] So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, [7] for we walk by faith, not by sight."
- Psalm 119:105 "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path."
 - We trust God even when we can't see the ground in front of us, because He knows and providentially controls all things and He has promised to be with us and get us safely into His arms.

- **What does a shepherd use a rod and staff for?**

- The rod protects against enemies or danger; the staff guides and supports the sheep.
- **Why do you think it's the rod and staff that comfort David, and not something that feels more obviously comforting? It's not "your warm hugs comfort me." Why do God's rod and staff comfort the believer?**
 - Because they remind us that God defends us from harm and won't let us stray far. His discipline and guidance are proof that He's near and that He loves us
 - Q. 26. How doth Christ execute the office of a king? A. Christ executeth the office of a king, in subduing us to himself, in ruling and defending us, and in restraining and conquering all his and our enemies.

Eternal Provision (5-6)

- **What does it mean to have a table prepared for you?**
 - It means you have been provided for. When you are seated for a meal you have food, water, safety.
 - More than that, you didn't stumble upon this table it was prepared for you specifically. Your mom doesn't make you meals with things you're allergic to in them, she makes food you can eat. The same is true of this, it's a provision for your specific needs.
 - God provides abundantly for His people. The Christian life, properly lived out, is a Spiritual feast.
 - Make diligent use of the ordinary means of grace! Listen to the sermon with diligence, prepare your heart for the Lord's supper, pray earnestly. Don't walk away hungry from the bountiful buffet the Lord has laid before you.
 - **Why is it significant that this table is in the presence of his enemies?**
 - It shows that God can bless and protect His people even when surrounded by trouble. Enemies can't stop God's goodness.
 - Think of Esther and Haman. They were hedged in on every side by people who wanted to kill and destroy them, but God turned their greatest danger into great victory.
 - The Christian life is a feast in the enemy camp. We will always be opposed, demonized, hated by this world but God will provide for us abundantly.
 - **We said the Christian life is a "feast in the enemy camp." What does the world offer as a feast? How is God's table different?**
- **What does this table look like for the believer?**
 - It's being filled with peace and joy through Christ, even in trials.
 - Anointing with oil
 - A sign of welcome, honor, and blessing. It means God delights in His people and gives them His Spirit, joy, and healing.
 - Cup overflowing
 - Again, the Christian life is a feast! It means having more than enough. God doesn't just give what we need, but blesses us abundantly with His love, grace, and spiritual riches.
- **David says goodness and mercy will "follow" him. What would it look like if we actually believed that every single day?**
- **The psalm ends with a doxology of praise and confidence, knowing that we have just addressed the reality of suffering and evil in this life, what is David confident in?**
 - Blessing in this life: That God's goodness and mercy will follow him every single day. God will never stop caring for him.
 - Eternal life with God: This life is not the end. It's nothing in comparison with the glory and joy that God has stored up for us.

-Close in Prayer