

The Lord is My Shepherd

Psalm 23

¹The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not be in want. ²He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, ³he restores my soul. He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. ⁴Even 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. ⁵You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. ⁶Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

Psalm 23 is the introduction of a group of psalms (23-28) which share many common themes. All of them deal in some way with God's protective shepherding of his people.

Our title brings to mind two powerful images. The word "Lord" always means God's absolute faithfulness to His people. "Shepherd" was a word picture used for kings in the ancient Near East. Here David the king acknowledges that the Lord is his Shepherd-King. The term "Shepherd" is also used in the OT as a specific description for Jesus the Messiah. Every believer of all time is a 'sheep' of God, and says Jesus that He is "my shepherd.

These two portraits set a foundation that bring a certainty about all the other statement made in this psalm as delineated below:

- All of our spiritual cares and needs will always be met .
- Green grass was in short supply but a faithful shepherd always some. For us it means all of physical needs will be provided for our good and that of our neighbor.
- When we need emotional and physical rest the Lord gives us quiet waters and restores my soul.
- Through His Word and Sacraments He leads in His paths of righteousness because that He does in His name.
- That allows us walk through the valley of the shadow of death without any fear of evil.
- His rod and staff will keep us safe from our enemies, sometimes may be us.
- "My cup" here means the Word of grace. This cup overflows. The Lord here shares to His own children an eternal abundance. The guests are all well filled.
- And to top it all off, we are assured everlasting eternal life where goodness and mercy follow all of our days there with the Lord.