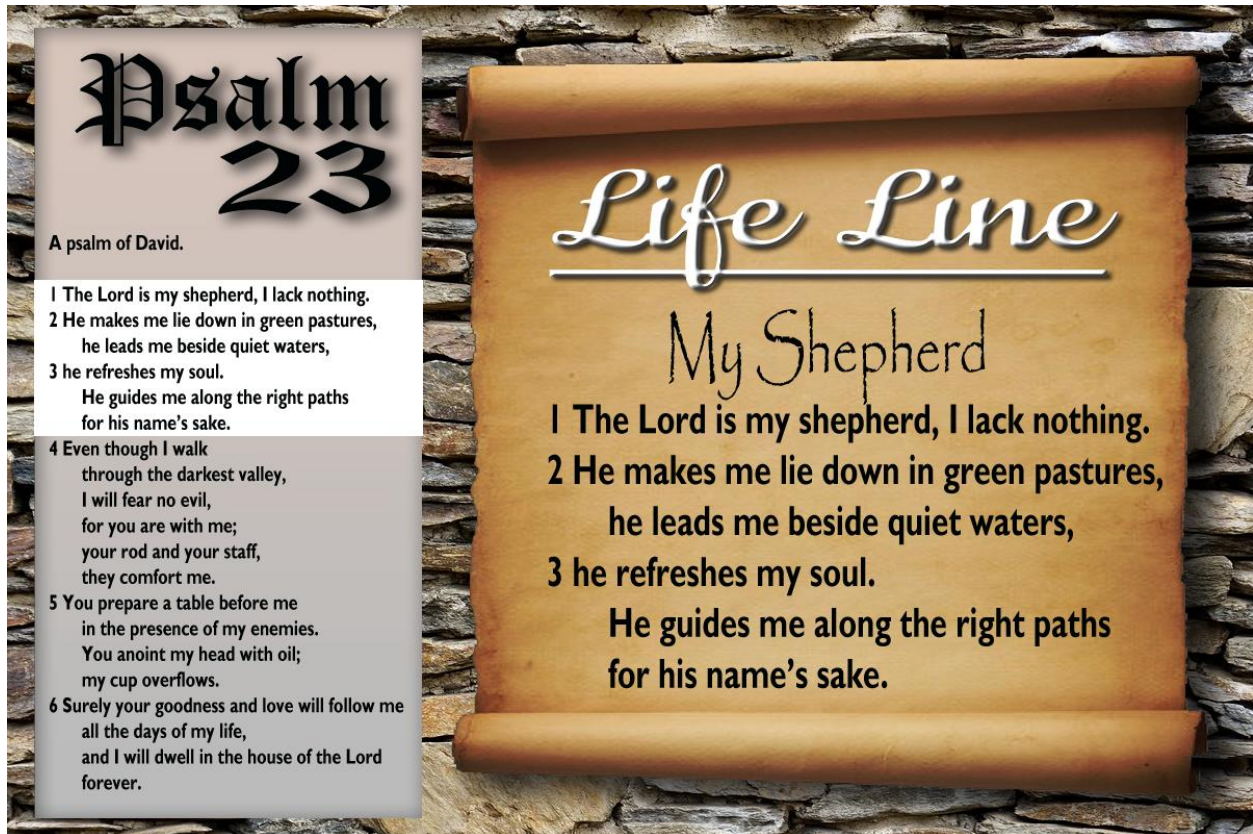


November 7, 2021

23rd Psalm

“My Shepherd”

Intro: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6qD_BehqFJk



Psalm 23:1-3

- 1 The LORD is my shepherd, I lack nothing.**
- 2 He makes me lie down in green pastures,**
he leads me beside quiet waters,
- 3 he refreshes my soul.**
He guides me along the right paths
for his name's sake.

Special Music: Psalm 23 Josh Sherman

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8OIMGnPUAdw>

CARETAKER OF MY SOUL

I rise at dawn

Relinquishing my wants.

My needs have been met.

Help me to breathe, Lord

Help me to breath.

The caretaker of my soul

Whispers to me

Through the branches of trees,

“I, your shepherd, beg you to rest

In the place of my grace,

Green pastures, cool water,

Refill and refresh.

Let go your wants

For your needs will be met.

There are many paths, child.

Some clear and some hidden

But only one path leads here,

To this place of renewal.

Only one brings you to living water.

Only one brings you to feast at my table.

Follow my voice

Come into my presence.

For this path is right

And will lead you to me.

Rest here, my child,

Feel the softness of grass.

**Hear the murmuring stream
Neath the shade of a tree.
Put your mind on hold
And count your blessings
As I refresh and comfort you.
Come to me
Be renewed.
I have prepared this place,
Just for you!"**

I have been known to go not-fishing. Not-fishing is not the same a fishing and Not-Catching. Not-fishing is just what it implies, not-fishing. I don't need a boat, a hook, bait, or a tackle box. As a matter of fact, having all that stuff is just a distraction. All I need is a fishing pole with a weight on the line, a stream or a lake, and turning off my cell phone. I suppose I could go not-fishing in my front yard or in a meadow somewhere. But it just wouldn't be the same. I enjoy the sound of the brook or the lapping of the waves.

For those of you that have never been not-fishing, you might want to try it sometime. You pick a day without a bunch of deadlines. You pack a simple lunch. Drive to your not-fishing spot. Cast your weighted line in the water. Sit or lie on the bank of the lake or stream. And... not-fish. You don't need to reel in your line and reposition it. You don't even need to hold onto or secure the pole. You're not going to catch anything anyway. After all, you are there to... not-fish.

Now, this is very important if we are going to go not-fishing. We cannot take our problems with us when we go not-fishing. If we are focused on solving our problems, we will not be not-fishing. Instead, we will be worrying, which is the exact opposite of not-fishing. If we do happen to notice that we have taken our problems with us to our not-fishing spot. We should drop those problems by the nearest tree and leave them there so that we can truly enjoy the time that we spend are spending not-fishing. Just tell God where you left those problems and let your Creator deal with them.

In so many ways, not-fishing is like yoga or meditation. It is a time of breathing and nurturing oneself. It is a mind-freeing, letting it all hang out,

contemplation and relaxing event where we allow ourselves of resting in the arms and warmth of our Creator. We shouldn't take another person with us when we go not-fishing unless we are going to teach someone else the finer points and benefits of not-fishing. But it is a GREAT time to have long periods of conversation and not-conversation with our God.

We begin to see the immense nature of God's love, forgiveness, mercy, and yes, shepherding when we are not-fishing. When it is just us resting in the creation made for us, how beautiful and magnificent the presence of God appears to us. This is a time of being refilled, renourished, replenished, reinvigorated, recommitted, and refreshed. This is our time of opening our hearts and minds up to God so that he can fill us to overflowing.

The 23rd Psalm was written by David. David knew pain, sorrow, betrayal, anger, death, grace, mercy, and love. He understood his relationship with his Creator better than most of us. This Psalm is a Psalm of shocking amazement as well as heartfelt gratitude. David had stood in the presence of God as his God fed him, sheltered him, and protected him, both from his enemies and the harshness of life. He feels so fortunate that God has continued to not only bless him but also meet all of his needs throughout the trials in his life.

The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want. I lack for nothing. My needs are met.

I stand before my shepherd and acknowledge His presence. He is my shepherd, my protector, my provider, and my promise. My needs are more

than exceeded. There is no want. I truly lack for nothing. God's provision is beyond sufficient. I need to look no farther than to be in my creator's presence.

David not only understood the nature of this relationship, but he also embraced it. That is why he wrote about it. There were so many times when David and his men were hungry, or they had no place to rest. He found himself in jeopardy every direction he turned. Saul wanted him dead. Saul wanted those who stood with David dead. And yet, God consistently provided for David and his crew. God provided food, shelter, rest, protection, and everything else David needed. God's provision was sufficient. David did not need to look any farther than to stand in the shadow of his shepherd. It may not have been the food that David wanted to eat, but he was grateful. The shelter may not have been the most ideal, but David was grateful. The rest may have come on hard ground, but David was grateful. The danger around him was very real and God may not have always protected David in a manner that he would have chosen, but he was grateful for the continued protection. But even more, David was grateful that God continued to fill his soul with mercy and grace in the darkest of times.

Sometimes, we can be so ungrateful when God provides us with oatmeal when what we want is a juicy steak. We may have to sleep in a tent once in a while. There are times when we really want to sleep in, even though there is a great deal of work to be done. And sometimes the danger can seem overwhelming, and we just want to throw our hands in the air and surrender.

Those are the times that we need to remember, **“The LORD is my shepherd, I lack nothing.”** We don’t need a steak. We don’t need a soft bed. We don’t need too much sleep. And we certainly don’t need to surrender to the danger. God’s got this. We lack for nothing.

Well, if we lack for nothing, then why does David turn around and say:

**He makes me lie down in green pastures,
he leads me beside quiet waters?**

It’s really quite simple. God provides for us in an environment that is most conducive for the protection and growth of our souls. Remember, this is about a Shepherd and sheep. The best place for a sheep to get refilled, renourished, replenished, reinvigorated, recommitted, and refreshed, is in a green meadow when the grass is fresh, and the water is quiet and pleasing. This is a place where we can relax and be healed; physically, mentally, and spiritually. If we have to worry about food, money, transportation, shelter, or anything else we feel we need, then we are missing the point of being in a green pasture and the quiet presence of fresh water; a place where all of our needs are met.

Sometimes, when we find ourselves in a utopia under the careful watch of the Shepherd, we forget about the times we wandered alone in the desert. If we remembered those times, we should begin to understand how David was so grateful for all that he had.

When God **“makes us lie down in green pastures, and leads us beside quiet waters,”** God is telling us that we need to go not-fishing. That we need to leave our problems at the foot of the cross, drop our weighted line in the water, and rest; give it all up and let the Creator us to overflowing. Not-fishing can be a very difficult thing to do. If we aren't careful, our minds will return to the foot of the cross to re-engage with those things that we have left there. And that is not what not-fishing is all about. It is not what lying in green pastures is all about. It is not what being led beside quiet waters is all about. When we pick up those problems and sins that we have already given over to Jesus, it contaminates the purity of the living water with which He is trying to fill us. The goal here, is a refreshed spirit, a refreshed soul.

“He refreshes my soul.”

This is our rest stop. This is where we refill our tanks, body, mind, and soul. **“He refreshes my soul.”** King James says, **“He restoreth my soul.”** He makes us new again. We all sin. We all fall backwards into the mud pit. We all let the grease, grime, and the darkness of this world wash over us at times. This is Jesus' opportunity to clean us up and make us presentable at the table. This is the chance to take that shower that we so desperately need. This is where we get rethrown on the potter's wheel, cracks and chinks fixed, and then refilled with all the goodness that Jesus readily supplies us with.

It is extremely hard to get refreshed and refilled we are running. We need to stop. We need to rest in the provision of the Shepherd. We need to let our Creator make us new and refill us. We can't do that if we don't lay down in the provided green pastures located beside the quiet waters.

Why does God do all this for us? Why does God go to the trouble of leading us to green pastures and still waters? Face it, this all seems like a lot of trouble God is going through just to make us happy. But that is why the next portion of verse 3 exists. David is about to say something very important that we often overlook.

**He guides me along the right paths
for his name's sake.**

God is guiding us where? Along the right paths. The paths where the green pastures and the quiet waters can be found. Places that we can get remolded and refilled. Why does He go to all the trouble to keep us on this path? I hate to break it to you but isn't about us. I know that there are those that don't want to hear that. God loves us and takes care of us because we are God's children and messengers.

**He guides me along the right paths
for his name's sake.**

For His name's sake. Our purpose is His purpose. Our work is His work. Our goals are His goals. Our generosity is His generosity. Our mercy is His mercy. Our grace is His grace. Our love is His love.

Without God remolding and refilling us, we will falter. We will fail in our mission. It is so easy to get confused about our purpose and our goals. Too, often our goal is to get to heaven. We work so hard to do this. We work so hard

that we forget that our ticket has already been bought and punched. That is no longer our goal.

Our goal moving forward is to share the gospel with everyone we meet. Our goal is to be good and faithful servants. We are on a journey of both discovery and grace. We should be lifting people along the way, sharing with them the story and message of Christ, so that they can join us on the journey.

One of the most important things that we need to share with them is how to... not-fish. We need to take them to our secret not-fishing hole and show them how to leave our troubles and sins behind, how to drop our weighted line in the quiet water, how to keep the journey pure, how to stand in the presence of God and let our creator mend and refill us so that we can remain faithful to His mission.

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AMEN

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