

The Lord as a Caring Shepherd and a Dependable Guide

Ps. 23 is one of the most familiar and best loved pieces of Scripture in the World. It has been called 'the Pearl of the Psalms' and 'the nightingale' singing in the dark night of loneliness. David wrote this psalm out of his own experience because he had spent his early years caring for sheep (1Sam16:10). He lived as a warrior and later became a king of Israel. He was proud of his profession as a shepherd in the past.

"The Lord is my shepherd" is found as the strongest affirmation of David, an awesome testimony which impacted people greatly throughout Centuries. In Scripture the word 'Lord' is the Hebrew name 'Jehovah'. It is the personal name for God that distinguished from all the false gods that people worshipped. The metaphor of 'the shepherd' is used sixty times in the Bible. A shepherd knows each one of his sheep. Sheep are completely dependent on the shepherd for provision, guidance and protection. The New Testament calls Jesus the good shepherd (Jn 10:11), the great shepherd (Heb. 13:20), and the chief shepherd (1Peter 5:4).

Jesus Christ as my shepherd is compassionate (Mathew 9:36), gives gentle care to his flock of sheep (Is.40:11), and displays courage (Jn 10:11-13). Do we hear his voice for life in abundance? Do we obediently follow him? Do we find the security in his hands? The personal relationship with him is to be affirmed. We have contentment in life while we allow our Shepherd to guide us. We can trust him for the essentials in life. Our Shepherd knows to guide us to green pastures and quiet waters that will restore us. 'To be restored' means 'to be refreshed and strengthened'. He nourishes us spiritually and emotionally that we can rest peacefully.

The Shepherd uses his staff to direct the sheep and setting boundaries for them. He also uses his rod as a weapon against predators. By guiding them to safe places and by fighting enemies the Shepherd's staff and rod were a comfort for the sheep. Even though David was surrounded by enemies he could feast in safety by God's power and protection. Death casts a frightening shadow over us in this world. Jesus Christ, the great Shepherd alone can walk with us through death's dark valley to bring us safely to the other side. Let us sing joyfully, "surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life."

God bless you.

In His glorious service,
Rev. K. P. Mathew
(Senior Pastor, IPC Hebron, Los Angeles)

The True Good Shepherd

(Varghese Mathew, Secretary)

The words of Psalm 23 have given comfort and encouragement to millions. They tell about Lord's desire to refresh His people and of His faithfulness to guide them through all of life's trials they may come across in this world.

In proclaiming "the Lord is my shepherd; the King of Israel acknowledges that he himself has a shepherd and describes the qualities of our God who is the true good shepherd. In the Bible, sheep and shepherds are referred to with great frequency. The shepherd in this Psalm is none other than God. A shepherd represents a more close and intimate relationship. A shepherd knows each one of his sheep. Psalm 95:7 says, He is our God and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand. In the New Testament, we see Jesus saying I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep (John 10:11).

Through parable of lost sheep, He even reiterates how much is He concerned about each one us and wants to make sure no one is lost out from eternal life. He knows each of our comings and goings, he knows every hair on our heads, he knows when even one of us is lost and has made every provision to find us through His Son Jesus Christ.

All shepherds, other than Christ, will fail us if we look to them for our salvation, because Jesus is one and the only good shepherd whom we can trust. He's the only way to God the Father. When we place ourselves under the care of Jesus our life is safe with Him. Jesus as a shepherd nurtures us by providing what we need to grow in faith, guides us in the path of righteousness and lays down His life to pay for our sins. Let us put our complete trust in Jesus the true good shepherd, and as David concludes his Psalm, we can confidently affirm that "Surely His goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever".

