

Daniel Waldschmidt

Psalm 23

I am one happy sheep! Why am I so happy? Because I have a good Shepherd. He gives me the best care. He does it all! I. He provides for me. II. He guides me. III. He protects me. IV He lets me dwell in his house forever.

I.

My shepherd provides for me. He makes sure all my physical needs are met. **“The LORD is my Shepherd, I shall not be in want.” (Psalm 23:1).** Over the years I have wanted a lot of things: Air Jordan basketball shoes, nice clothes, an i-phone. And sometimes I didn’t get what I wanted. But I’ve never been **in want**. The Good Shepherd has always given me plenty of food, plenty of clothes, and he has always put a roof over my head. Sometimes I even get some of those things I didn’t need but only wanted! So richly has the Good Shepherd provided for me!

Notice how peaceful everything is in verse 2: **“He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters” (Psalm 23:2).** The Good Shepherd has given us peaceful and quiet lives. We enjoy peace in our country. Right now there is not a war on our own soil.

He also gives us peace in our day to day lives. It’s true that sometimes it feels like everything is crashing down around us. When one thing goes wrong, six other things go wrong. When the car breaks down, so does the refrigerator and the washer, and of course all this happens when the bills are due. But as we look back over our lives, we realize that those things are the exception, not the rule. Disasters happen occasionally but not every day. The Good Shepherd has led us beside quiet waters” where we can enjoy peace.

My shepherd also provides for my spiritual needs. **“He restores my soul.” (Psalm 23:3).** Gatorade commercials tell us that athletes need to drink Gatorade to replenish their carbohydrates. Psalm 23 tells us that Jesus replenishes our souls. If your soul needs to be replenished, that means it has been drained and depleted. What kinds of things can drain your soul?

Any type of bitter fighting, especially with someone close to you can drain your soul. Don’t you feel that? You just feel drained after you have been fighting for a while. It’s almost as if our brains were not designed to take that much conflict. It’s draining after a while. What can replenish your soul in the aftermath of so much fighting? Only the grace of a Savior who forgives your sins and allows you to forgive others too. Only the grace of him who hung on the cross can restore your soul.

II.

Not only does my Good Shepherd provide for me, he also guides me. **“He guides me along the right paths for his name’s sake.”** We all grew up with “He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name’s sake.” Numerous times every day, we come to a fork in the road. One way is the path of righteousness, the other the path of un-righteousness. For example, you feel a conflict starting to mount with your spouse or somebody else. The path of righteousness would be to stop it there and say, “I’m sorry. I see it from your point of view. Here’s all I was thinking...” The path of unrighteousness would be to get angry and insist that you get your way.

The path of righteousness is always what’s best for us and the path of unrighteousness is always self-destructive. The Good Shepherd knows that and so he guides us down paths of righteousness. But I can

remember many times where despite my Shepherd's guidance, I went down the path of unrighteousness. In Isaiah it says, **"We all like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way." (Isaiah 53:6).** So we repent of that and cling to the perfect righteousness of Jesus. You see every time Jesus came to a fork in the road, he chose the path of righteousness, and now through faith in Jesus God lets that perfect obedience count for us.

As the Shepherd guides us, he also protects us.

III.

Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me." (Psalm 23:4). Of course we are used to "valley of the shadow of death." They changed it to darkest valley because the Good Shepherd not only protects us at the time of our death but also in the other dark valleys that we go through in life as well.

Sometimes shepherds had to move their flocks from one grazing pasture to another. Many times they had to take their flocks through deep, dark valleys to get there. Those valleys had plenty of predators in them: coyotes, wolves, cougars, stray dogs, maybe even a lion or a bear. If it were not for the shepherd, those sheep would be easy prey. But the shepherd protected them with **"his rod and his staff."** With his staff, he kept the sheep from wandering off by themselves and becoming easy targets. With his rod he would beat back any wild animals that attacked the flock.

David, who wrote this psalm was himself a shepherd. He had to use his rod on several occasions. Listen to what it says in 1 Samuel: **"David said to Saul, 'Your servant has been keeping his father's sheep. When a lion or a bear came and carried off a sheep from the flock, I went after it STRUCK it and rescued the sheep from its mouth. When it turned on me, I seized it by the hair, STRUCK it and killed it.'" (1 Samuel 17:34-35).**

"Speak softly," Teddy Roosevelt said, "and carry a big stick." The LORD (figuratively speaking) carries a big stick. We are always under the LORD's protection. Keep that in mind the next time you feel like you're in danger: **"Your rod and your staff, they comfort me."** The all-powerful God is protecting you.

The Good Shepherd will even protect you when you go through the valley of the shadow of death. Your Good Shepherd will see you through death to eternal life. And then you will dwell in his house forever. That brings us to the last part of our sermon today: **He lets me dwell in his house forever.**

IV

Verse 5 says, **"You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows." (Psalm 23:5)** We have a pretty abrupt change here, don't we? In just the verse right before this we were sheep in the fields, but now the scene changes and we are people at a banquet.

Here the LORD is pictured as someone who invites us into his house and shows us hospitality. We will experience that most fully at the end of the world when we eat at the banquet in the kingdom of God. But we experience his hospitality even now when he sets his table before us at the Lord's Supper. When we have devotions, come to Bible class and church, Jesus sets before us a feast of his word to enjoy.

"My cup overflows." (Psalm 23:5) Maybe you have had the experience that you are over at someone's house for dinner and they give you something to drink like soda or water or lemonade and you are about half way

done with your drink and they are already asking you, “Do you want some more?” Or you are eating dinner and you are starting to slow down because you are starting to get full but then the host says, “Eat up! There’s plenty more where that came from!” You might think, “My host is being too kind! What I have is enough but he wants to give me more! My cup overflows!”

The LORD does the same thing, he makes your cup overflow. The story is told of a poor woman who looked at her little piece of bread and her cup of cold water and exclaimed, “All of this! And Jesus Christ too!” When we have Jesus Christ, everything else is bonus. Everything else is our cup overflowing.

I am one happy sheep because I have a Good Shepherd. A Good Shepherd who provides for me and guides me and protects me and lets me dwell in his house forever. Amen.