

ST. MATTHEW AME CHURCH
WOMEN'S BIBLE STUDY FELLOWSHIP
FALL SERIES:

THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD

PSALM 23



ST. MATTHEW AME CHURCH
ORANGE, NEW JERSEY
REV. MELVIN E. WILSON, PASTOR/TEACHER
MRS. RUTH DEAS, FACILITATOR

St. Matthew AME Church
Orange, N.J.
Rev. Melvin E. Wilson, Pastor/Teacher

**Women's Bible Study Fellowship
Saturday, September 10, 2022**

Fall Series: "The LORD Is My Shepherd "

"The LORD is my shepherd, " Psalm 23:1a NIV

Session I: "Relationship and Resources"

"The LORD is my shepherd, I lack nothing." Psalm 23:1 NIV

I. Introduction

At the center of the Bible is the book of Psalms. This great collection of songs and prayers expresses the heart and soul of humanity. In them, the whole range of human experiences is expressed. There are no clichés in this book. Instead, David and the other writers honestly pour out their true feelings, reflecting a dynamic, powerful and life-changing friendship with God. The psalmists confess their sins, express their doubts and fears, ask God for help in times of trouble and praise and worship Him. Psalm 51:1-6, 7, 10, Psalm 34:1-8, Psalm 40:1-3.

As you read the book of Psalms, you will hear believers crying out to God from the depths of despair, and you will hear them singing to him in the heights of celebration. But whether despairing or rejoicing, you will always hear them sharing honest feelings with God. Because of the honesty expressed by the psalmists, men and women throughout history have come, again and again, to the book of Psalms for comfort during times of struggle and distress. And with the psalmists, they have risen from the depths of despair to new heights of joy and praise as they also discovered the power of God's everlasting love and forgiveness.

The author of Psalm 23 is David. He wrote 73 of the 150 psalms. Almost everyone religious or not, has heard Psalm 23 because it is quoted so frequently. In the psalm God is seen as a caring shepherd and a dependable guide.

II. "THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD"

- The beautiful relationships given to us repeatedly in Scripture between God and us are those of a father to his children and a shepherd to his sheep. These concepts were first conceived in the mind of God our Father. They were made possible and practical through the work of Christ. They are confirmed and made real in us through the agency of the gracious Holy Spirit. I John 3:1, John 10:11, 14

- So, when the simple- though sublime statement is made by one that “The Lord is my shepherd,” it immediately implies a profound yet practical relationship between God. To think that God in Christ is deeply concerned about each one of us as a particular person immediately give great purpose and enormous meaning to our lives.
- Obviously, David in the Psalm is speaking not as the shepherd though he was one, but as a sheep, one of the flock. We’re not literal sheep and yet our relationship with the Lord is like a sheep’s relationship with his shepherd.
- David knew from firsthand experience that the lot in life of any particular sheep depended on the type of shepherd who owned it. Some shepherds were gentle, kind, intelligent, brave and selfless in their devotion to their stock. Under another shepherd, sheep would struggle, starve and suffer endless hardship.
- It is no accident that God has chosen to call us sheep. The behavior of sheep and human beings is similar in many ways. Our fears, stubbornness, helplessness, perverse habits and even our stupidity are all parallels of profound importance. Yet despite these adverse characteristics Christ chose us, calls us by name, makes us His own and delights in caring for us.
- David spoke with a strong sense of pride and devotion and admiration. It was though he literally boasted aloud, “Look at who my shepherd is – my owner-my manager! ““The Lord is!” David was proclaiming in these few words that he was so grateful for a loving and caring God. From experience, he acknowledged God for who He is.
- We are under obligation to recognize His ownership of us. He literally lays Himself out for us continually, He is ever interceding for us; He is ever guiding us by His gracious Spirit. He is ever working on our behalf to ensure that we will benefit from His care.

III. “You Can’t Have It Both Ways”

- It is a tragic truth that many people who really never come under God’s direction or management claim the “The Lord is my shepherd.” They seem to hope that by merely admitting that He is their Shepherd somehow, they will enjoy the benefits of His care and management without paying the price of forfeiting their own fickle and foolish way of life.
- We cannot have it both ways. Either we belong or we don’t. Ask yourself these questions:
 - Do I really belong to Him?
 - Do I really recognize His right to me?
 - Do I respond to His authority and acknowledge His ownership?
 - Do I find freedom, joy and completeness in this arrangement?
 - Do I sense a purpose and deep contentment because I am under His direction?

IV. "I Shall Not Be In Want"

- What a proud, positive bold statement to make. This is the sentiment of a sheep utterly satisfied with its shepherd, perfectly content with its lot in life.
- The word "want" as used in the scripture has a broader meaning than one might at first be imagined. No doubt the main concept is that of not lacking-not deficient-in proper care or management.
- A second emphasis is the idea of being utterly content in the Good Shepherd's care and consequently not craving or desiring anything more. This may seem a strange statement for a man like David to have made if we think in terms only of physical and material needs. David had been hounded by the forces of his enemy, Saul as well as by those of his own estranged son Absalom. David was obviously a man who had known intense deprivation; deep poverty, acute hardship and anguish of spirit.
- It is absurd to assert on the basis of this statement that the child of God, the sheep in the Shepherd's care, will never experience lack or need.
- It is imperative to keep a balanced view of the Christian life. We should take a long hard look at life. As God's chosen people, we may be called on to experience lack of wealth or material benefits, health challenges, heartache or disappointments.

- But we can still proclaim "I shall not want," meaning I shall not lack the expert care and management of God.
- There are many wealthy people who are poor in spirit, shriveled in soul and unhappy in life.
- When you trust God, you know that He is the shepherd whom no trouble is too great as He cares for His flock. He loves us for our own sake as well as His pleasure in us. Our God will, be on the job twenty-four hours a day to see that we are properly provided for in every detail.
- A shepherd will go to no end of trouble and labor to supply sheep with the finest grazing, the richest pasture, ample winter food and clean water. He will spare Himself no pains to provide shelter from storms, protection from ruthless enemies and parasites. "The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep."
- We can trust that God will always meet our needs. Whatever we need on earth He will always supply. Philippians 4:19
- We must remember, however, the difference between our wants and our needs.
- Those who are satisfied with their Shepherd, know that all of their needs will be met. These individuals are rich in spirit and generous in heart. They radiate a serene confidence and a quiet joy that overcomes all difficult challenges of their time.

"THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD, I SHALL NOT WANT"