

St. Matthew AME Church  
Orange, New Jersey  
Rev. Melvin E. Wilson, Pastor/Teacher

Women's Bible Study Fellowship  
Saturday, October 8, 2022

Fall Series: "THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD."  
"The Lord is my shepherd," Psalm 23:1a

### ***Session II: "Rest and Refreshment "***

"He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters." Psalm 23:2

#### **I. Review of Background**

The book of Psalm is a great collection of songs and prayers that express the heart and soul of humanity. David and the other writers honestly pour out their true feelings, reflecting a dynamic, powerful and life-changing friendship with God. In the book of Psalm, men confess their sins, express their doubts and fears, ask God for help in times of trouble and praise and worship Him. Because of the honesty expressed by the psalmist, men and women throughout history have come again and again to the book of Psalm for comfort during times of struggle and distress.

#### **II. Review of Session I: "Relationship and Resources "**

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

- The psalms we know and love are the ones that come into our minds when we need them. They inspire us, comfort us, correct us, just when we need a word from the Lord.

- Almost, everyone, whether religious or not, has heard Psalm 23 because it is quoted so frequently. The Psalm has such a powerful and yet gentle image of our relationship with God. This psalm is read often by the bedside of a dying person or at the funeral of a loved one.

"The Lord is my Shepherd" immediately implies a profound, yet practical relationship between God and us. In this psalm, David is speaking not as the shepherd, though he was one, but as a sheep, one of the flock. David knew from firsthand experience that the lot in life of any particular sheep depended on the type of shepherd who owned it.

- 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 and helplessness are all parallels of profound importance. Sheep are not the smartest animals. They often wander, get lost or get stuck. Basically, sheep can't save themselves.

- The "Lord is my Shepherd " means that we acknowledge God as the manager and keeper of our lives. If we are convinced that the "Lord is our Shepherd," then we will be content with not only his care and his love, but we will also be content with his leadership, his guidance and his discipline.

We will rest and trust, knowing that he knows what's best for us.

- Those who are satisfied with their Shepherd, know that all of their needs will be met.

- It is absurd to assert on the basis of this statement; "I lack nothing " that the child of God, the sheep in the Shepherd's care will never lack or need.

- A committed relationship with God, "The Good Shepherd" is based on our faith that I shall not lack the expert care and effective management of God. We can trust that God will always meet our needs.

- He is the Shepherd because of His fondness for His sheep-who loves them for their own sake as well as His personal pleasure in them.

- God will be on the job twenty-four hours a day. (Throughout the day He casts His eye on us)

No trouble is too great as He cares for us.

### III. "Rest"

" He makes me lie down in green pastures," Psalm 23:2a

- The strange thing about sheep is that because of their very makeup, it is almost impossible for them to be made to lie down unless four requirements are met.

1) Sheep refuse to lie down unless they are free of all fear.

- As long as there is even the slightest suspicious danger from dogs, coyotes, bears, or other enemies, the sheep stand up ready to flee for their lives. They have little or no means of self-defense. They are helpless, timid, feeble creatures whose only recourse is to run.

- It is significant that to be at rest, there must be a definite sense of freedom from fear. It is only the shepherd himself who can provide release from the anxiety. It all depends on the diligence of the shepherd whether or not the flock is free of disturbing influences. The shepherd must keep watch over the flock. The shepherd is the protector.

We live in a most uncertain time. Any hour can bring disaster, danger and distress from the unknown. No one can tell what a day will produce. We live in a sense of anxiety, fear or in a sense of quite rest. Generally, it is the "unknown " the "unexpected " that produces the greatest panic. It is the grip of fear that most of us are unable to cope with the cruel circumstance and harsh complexities of life.

- Then in the midst of our trouble there suddenly comes the awareness that He, the Christ, the "Good Shepherd " is there. It makes all the difference. His presence in the situation throws a different light on the whole scene. Suddenly things are not half as bad nor nearly so terrifying. You will find yourself delivered from fear. Rest returns and you can relax.

2) Because of the social behavior within a flock, sheep will not lie down, unless they are free from friction with others of their kind. In every animal society there is an established order of dominance or status within the group. Generally, an arrogant, cunning and domineering old sheep will be boss over any bunch of sheep. It maintains its position of prestige by butting and driving others from the best grazing or favorite backgrounds. Because of this rivalry, tension, and competition for status and self-assertion, there is friction in the flock. The sheep cannot lie down and rest in contentment. This continuous conflict and jealousy within the flock can be a

most detrimental thing. The sheep become edgy, tense, disconnected and restless. They lose weight and become irritable.

- When the shepherd is present and he attracts the attention of the flock, the sheep quickly forget their foolish rivalries and stop their fighting.

The Shepherd's presence made all the difference in their behavior.

- And in our human relationships when we become acutely aware of being in the presence of Christ, our foolish, selfish, snobbery and rivalry will end. It is the humble heart walking quietly and contently in the close and intimate companionship of Christ, that is at rest, that can relax, simply glad to lie down and let the world go by.

3.) If tormented by flies or parasites sheep will not lie down. Only when free of these pests can they relax.

- Sheep, especially in the summer, can be driven to absolute distraction by nasal flies, warble flies and ticks. When tormented by these pests, it is literally impossible for them to lie down and rest. Instead they are up on their feet, stamping their legs, shaking their heads ready to rush off into the brush for relief from the pests.
- Only the diligence care of the shepherd who keeps constant lookout for these insects will prevent them from annoying his flock. A good shepherd will apply various types of insect repellants to his sheep. He will see that there are shelter belts of trees and brush available. Where they can find refuge and release from tormentors. The shepherd must be among his sheep daily keeping a close watch on their behavior.

In the Christian life there are found to be many small irritations. There are the annoyances of petty frustrations and some little disagreeable experiences.

- In the midst of these irritations the gracious Holy Spirit brings quietness, serenity, strength and calmness in the face of frustration. We must ask Him to come in to assist us. He (Holy Spirit, The Good Shepherd) takes over in His own wonderful way. He immediately comes into our consciousness. And because of the assurance that He has become active on our behalf, a sense of quiet contentment comes over us. Then we are able to lie down in peace and rest. All because of what the Good Shepherd does.

4.) Sheep will not lie down as long as they feel in need of finding food. They must be free from hunger. This of course is clearly implied by the statement, "He makes me lie down in green pastures."

- Green pastures did not happen by chance. Green pastures were the product of tremendous labor, time and skill in land use. Green pastures were the result of clearing rough, rocky land; of tearing out brush and roots and stumps; of deep plowing and careful soil preparation; of seeding and planting special grains; of irrigating with water and taking care of vegetables that would feed the flock.
- Green pastures are essential to success with sheep. When lambs are maturing and the ewes need green, succulent food for heavy milk flow, there is no substitute for good pasture. The shepherd is pleased when he sees his sheep satisfied, therefore they can lie down to rest.

- A hungry, ill-fed sheep is even on its feet on the move, searching for another scanty mouthful of forage to try and satisfy its growing hunger. Such sheep are not content, they do not thrive. They lack vigor and vitality.
- The Good Shepherd's concern for our care is beyond our comprehension. The Good Shepherd:
  1. Clears the rocks of stony unbelief
  2. Tears out the roots of of bitterness and anger
  3. Breaks up the hard-proud human heart
  4. Then He sows the seed of His own precious Word, if given a chance to grown, will produce rich groups of contentment and peace.

#### IV. "Refreshment"

"he leads me beside quiet waters. "Psalm 23:2b

- Although sheep thrive in dry, semi-arid countries, they still require water. The key or the clue to where water can be obtained lies with the shepherd. It is he who knows where the best drinking places are. In fact, very often he is the one who with much effort has provided the watering places. And it is these spots that he leads the flock. When sheep are thirsty, they become restless and set out in search of water.
- If not led to the good water supplies of clean, pure water, they will often end up drinking from polluted pot holes. Where they pick up internal parasites or other disease germs.
- David, when he composed Psalm 23, knew this. Looking at life from the standpoint of a sheep, he wrote, "He (the Good Shepherd) leads me beside quiet waters." In other words, He alone knows where the still, quiet, deep, clean, pure water is to be found that can satisfy His sheep and keep them fit.
- And in precisely the same manner Christ, our Good Shepherd, made it clear that thirsty souls of men and women can only be fully satisfied when their capacity and thirst for spiritual life is fully quenched by drawing on Himself.
- In Matthew 5:6, Jesus said, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled (satisfied)."
- John 7:37 – "if anyone is thirsty let him come to me and drink."
  - "To drink" in spiritual terminology simply means "to take in" or "to accept" or to believe. That is to say it implies that a person accepts and assimilates the very life of God in Christ to the point where it becomes a part of him/her.
- When we "take in, accept or believe in Jesus, we realize that He is the only one who can satisfy us. We will find rest and refreshment only in Him. It is He who is the one who makes sense and purpose and meaning out of our lives.
  - We will come to understand that we are the object of the shepherd's special care and attention.

- Dignity and direction come into the events of your life. Your life becomes useful. All of this is refreshing, stimulating, and invigorating. Your thirst for reality in life is less stressful.