



Sermon Growth Guide

April 18, 2021

What David Knew - Shepherd

Psalm 23

Key Verse: Psalm 23:1

“The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing.”

Big Idea: It is right to listen to Jesus, our Good Shepherd.

Foundations

Our new series centers around King David seeing the character and care of Christ Jesus through his relationship with the Triune God of Scripture, Yahweh, who is one in essence, distinct in person: Father, Son, Spirit.

This week we turn to Psalm 23, which begins with one of the most famous lines of poetry of all time, “The Lord is my shepherd.” Tragically, we don’t always hear the Lord’s voice in our lives. Pastor Tim lists six possible reasons we may be missing God’s full counsel in our daily living:

1. Too Much Noise
2. Willful Disobedience
3. Passive Disobedience
4. No Voice Recognition
5. In a Bad Flock
6. Not in a Good Flock

Using either the sermon manuscript or your own sermon notes, take time to understand each of these ways in which we can miss the voice of God in our lives.

Together with your circle, pray that God will use this time together to further heal you and equip you for the joyous mission of walking as the salt of the earth, the light of the world. Rejoice together that you have a Good Shepherd to follow each and every day.

Understanding God’s Word

Read and discuss David’s call in 1 Samuel 16:1-13.

What reason is given for David being “a man after God’s own heart” in Acts 13:22?

Read and reflect on Psalm 23 and then share with one another what strikes you most from this Psalm in your current season of life.

Applying God’s Word

It is right to listen to Jesus, our Good Shepherd. Yet our lives can so quickly become filled with so many distractions. When this happens, we stop following our Good Shepherd, which puts ourselves and others in harm’s way. Referring to the list to the left as a guide, identify where you struggle to listen to Jesus and discern together ways to set healthier patterns for your life.

Witnessing God’s Word

Jesus is the Good Shepherd. What joy to be able to share with others that there is a Good Shepherd! How might you lean in toward someone around you this week and share that there is a Good Shepherd and He is approachable and full of joy and hope?

No matter where you are, there is a Psalm to reach you and lead you back home to God.

This is one of the most powerful chunks of the Bible out there; maybe one of the most powerful poems in human history. Does it bring back memories? It does for me. The first time I truly understood the power of this Psalm, I was a hospital chaplain for a summer during seminary. My beeper went off at 2 in the morning when I was on-call, sleeping at the hospital. I crawled out of my cot and went to the ER. Doctors and nurses semi-circled a room with drawn curtains where, I came to learn, a little girl had just died of an enlarged heart. The parents were inside weeping. A nurse turned to me and said, "I'm glad you're here, chaplain. You're the only one who can go in there now." Then she pointed at the Bible in my hand, "And that's the only thing that can help them." I went in and read Psalm 23. "The Lord is my shepherd."

We are starting a series called **What David Knew**. I want us to look together at the Psalms. It's been said that mature disciples, people who are really growing in Christ, spend a lot of time in the Psalms. The Psalms distill the power of the Word of God into songs of prayer. They help us come to God with the full range of emotions. If you're happy, there's a Psalm for that. If you're confused, there's a Psalm for that. If you're sad, if you're angry, if you're suffering, there is a Psalm to reach you wherever you are and lead you back home to God.

We are going to look at Psalms David wrote. King David, the second King of Israel, 1,000 years before Jesus, wrote half of the Psalms himself. These Psalms give us this incredible intersection between the heart of an ordinary man, David, and the Word from the Spirit of God. David and the Holy Spirit intersect here. The real emotion and real struggle of a very real man—a man who was great in some ways and horrible in others, strong in some ways and weak in others—this real man with real struggles intersects with the Holy Spirit speaking to his heart. What we find at these intersections is a picture of the character of God, and I'm pulling no punches here, it's a picture of Jesus. Over

the next seven weeks we are going to find Jesus in the Psalms of David. But it is not just an academic exercise. What you will learn if you hang in with it is this, you will learn that no matter where you are, there is a way home to God from there. If you need to get to Jesus from where you are, the Psalms can show you the way. The Psalms show us Jesus. In the most surprising way, that is what David knew.

So, here's Psalm 23. Our first example. "The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing" (Psalms 23:1). The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. It is a statement of fact. It's not so much a call to suppress our desires, "don't want anything," as a statement of fact that God provides for me. It's very personal, by the way, which is one of the reasons Psalm 23 is so popular. The Lord is my shepherd. Mine. I know Him. He knows me, right where I am.

David knew about shepherds. He was one. When the prophet Samuel was sent to the house of Jesse in Bethlehem, God told Samuel that one of Jesse's sons would be the next King of Israel, for "the Lord has sought out a man after his own heart and appointed him ruler of his people" (1 Samuel 13:14). All the older brothers were paraded in front of Samuel. Here's a good one. Here's a strong one. Here's a smart one. But God told Samuel it wasn't any of those guys. It goes on, "So he asked Jesse, 'Are these all the sons you have?' 'There is still the youngest,' Jesse answered. 'He is tending the sheep.' Samuel said, 'Send for him'" (1 Samuel 16:11). That was David. The little guy out with the sheep. But that was how God was training David for kingship. God trained David as a humble shepherd to become a shepherd king.

But this Psalm isn't about David. It's about God. God is my shepherd. And what kind of shepherd is God? With God as your shepherd, you lack nothing. God is a good shepherd. If you get a bad shepherd, you might wind up being a scrawny, unfed, unwatered, unprotected sorry little thing of a sheep! But God is a good shepherd. "He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he



refreshes my soul. He guides me along the right paths for his name's sake" (Psalms 23:2-3). For His name's sake, He cares for me, my God. Because what is His name? What is His reputation? God is the Good Shepherd God. For the sake of that name God shepherds my soul. For the sake of that name, God guides me down good and right paths, refreshes my soul, cares for me, one of His sheep, because His name is Good Shepherd, and God will not let His name be sullied. God doesn't care for us because of our merits. The ground underneath God's loving care is His own character, His grace.

"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" (Psalms 23:4). You know how that usually goes. "Yea, though I walk through the Valley of the Shadow of Death." Some say David had a place in mind, the valley where the road runs from Jerusalem to Jericho. Bob Simpich painted it for us; it's out there in the hall. A valley so deep there are places where the sun never shines. Death Valley. I'm not afraid. My Shepherd is there. My God is there. Even when I'm suffering, even when I'm passing through those times when I feel like my whole life is coming apart, my life is coming to pieces, I'm not afraid. Why? My Shepherd is there. He's got a rod—that's to beat off the wild animals and attacking forces. He's got a staff—that's to keep me close to Him and shape my own life, my own walk. He's with me.

He has power to set a table in front of me right in the face of all the evils that oppose my life; to make a feast right there. "You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows" (Psalms 23:5). He even anoints my head with oil, the oil of gladness. My face shines with joy in the valley of the shadow of death. With the shadow of death cast over me, with my enemies at the table with me, with evil rushing at me with all it's got—my face shines, my chin is lifted, my eyes are gleaming, my Shepherd has got me, and has got this. We don't

know exactly when David wrote this psalm. Wouldn't you like to know? To just imagine pen going to paper, and this the result! But this is one of the parts of Psalm 23 that makes us think it was written when David was on the run, either from King Saul, who spent a lot of time trying to find David and kill him; or from his own son, Absalom, who spent a lot of time trying to find David and kill him; or at war with the Philistines, who spent a lot of time trying to find David and kill him. The threat is real. This isn't "Yea, though I can't find my favorite brand of almond milk for my latte." This is real stuff. I lay my head down, I don't know if I will wake again. I am not afraid. My Shepherd has got this. My life is in His hands.

That kind of care goes on forever. That's not just a moment in time. That is a lifetime, a life. "Surely your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever" (Psalms 23:6). The beauty of this psalm, and why we read it when we read it, why you've heard it when you've heard it, is that picture right there. That promise. My God, my Shepherd, He has my life in His hands and He will never let me go. Even though I die, as things die and pass away from this world, I am still His and forever in the house of the Lord my God. God is my Shepherd.

There are lots of references in the Bible to God as a Shepherd. When Jesus came, he said "I am the Shepherd." All of those qualities we see in Psalm 23, all those promises of the character of God, Jesus fulfills them all. In John 10, Jesus says, "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep" (John 10:11). Not only does Jesus lead and guide, protect and feed the sheep, Jesus dies for the sheep. Then he said, "I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me" (John 10:14). My sheep know me. They know my voice. Jesus is our Shepherd. He is your Shepherd. He is our Good Shepherd guiding us by His voice. Why does it feel sometimes like we can't hear Him?



The Psalm is very matter of fact. God is my shepherd. God guides me. Read that back onto Jesus. Jesus is my shepherd. I can hear His voice. What if I don't? What about when I can't? As soon as I opened my mind to that question in my studies this week, about a hundred answers flooded in. I want to give you six. Six reasons you might not be hearing the Shepherd's voice. **(1) The noise.** There's too much noise! We keep so much noise going in our lives. Imagine a flock of sheep all with AirPods in their ears, or Beats Headphones! Can you stop the noise and listen? **(2) Willful disobedience.** It's hard to hear your Shepherd when you are sprinting as fast as you can away from Him. **(3) Passive disobedience.** Is there something the Lord has asked you to do that you have not done? Something the Lord told you to get rid of, or stop, or go get, or pursue? He made it clear as day, but you don't want to do it. You won't hear until you do. **(4) No voice recognition.** Any of you trying to talk to your phones these days? Your voice recognition software is corrupt. We gain voice recognition by spending time in the Word of God, reading and absorbing Jesus' voice. **(5) In a bad flock.** It's hard to hear Jesus when everyone around you turns away when He talks. **(6) Not in a good flock.** Maybe you have a good flock, a good church, but you're not getting in there with them. They all turn to hear Jesus together, but you are nowhere to be found. There are plenty of reasons you may not hear your Shepherd's voice, but He is speaking.

David saw God as His shepherd. "The Lord is my shepherd." David saw, in a sense, Jesus—the Good Shepherd who was on the way. David, the Bible tells us, was a man after God's own heart. It says that in 1 Samuel 13, but then again we get it in Acts. "After removing Saul, he made David their king. God testified concerning him: 'I have found David son of Jesse, a man after my own heart; he will do everything I want him to do'" (Acts 13:22). That's faith. That's being a person after God's own heart. He will do everything I want him to do. He knows I'm his shepherd. She

knows, she belongs to me and she listens to my voice. That's faith. That's going after God's heart. You do what God asks of you. When God says go, you go. When God says stop that, you stop. When God says speak up, you speak up. When God says be silent, you be silent. When God says take a step of faith, you take a step of faith. "He will do everything I want him to do." Yes. The Lord is my shepherd. I am a sheep of His pasture, cared for at His merciful hand. Whatever my shepherd wants. I'm His.

If you can't hear His voice, maybe you're suffering one of those six reasons. Run back at them in reverse. Not in a good flock? Get into church, get into Christian fellowship, get into a flock where every sheep around you, when Jesus speaks, their ears perk up and their heads turn the same direction! In a bad flock? Get out. Go get in a good one. No voice recognition? Get back into the Bible. Start reading. Daily. Learn the language of God and start to recognize the voice of Jesus. Is there something Jesus has asked you to do? Do it. Have you been running away from the Shepherd? Stop running away. Turn around. Run toward Jesus. Is there too much noise? Shut it off. Let the Lord speak to a listening ear. The Shepherd is speaking. Can the Shepherd change your life? Yes, if you listen and respond. Can the Good Shepherd heal Minneapolis? Yes, if we will listen. Can Jesus the Shepherd bring the races of our nation together as one in His body? Yes, if we will hear His voice above all others. Let the Shepherd call to open, listening, responsive ears. Be a man, be a woman, after God's own heart.

And finally, there is an interesting turn in Psalm 23. First it talks about God. "The Lord is my shepherd." But then it turns. Then it talks to God. "I will fear no evil, for you are with me." There is a difference between talking about God and talking to God. Talk to your Lord. Speak to the Shepherd of your soul. Your good shepherd died for you. He loves you. He hears, even when you can't.

