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Pastor's Corner

Do You Know the Shepherd?
(Psalm 23)

The 23rd Psalm has guided many a life through the difficult paths. This Psalm has served as an instrument that gives us strength during and in the midst of our adversities. It does not matter what the difficulty is, the 23rd Psalm has a word for that moment. The most powerful statement is found in its beginning. It is here that everything is made clear. Here, David states the source of his strength, the source of his endurance, as the 23rd Psalm. As David announces to all of the world, **"The Lord is my Shepherd I shall not want,"** it is here that David establishes for all the world to hear who God is to him. The Psalmist goes on to tell us all the wonderful and needful things that God does for us each and every day. It is here at the very beginning of the Psalm that David establishes for the reader that the Lord is his Shepherd and because God is his Shepherd David will not want.

David goes on to describes the various ways the Lord will meet his needs. The very first thing the Shepherd gives is peace: "**He makes us lie down in green pastures, He leads me beside still waters, God restores my soul."** It is the Shepherd who quiets us in the midst of our trials. It is the Shepherd who gives us the peace that seems to evade us in those moments that prove to be overwhelming. The Shepherd not only

gives us peace, the Shepherd is the guide that keeps us on the path of righteousness. David understands without God's involvement, without the Shepherd in our lives leading us along the various roads we all travel, we would not be able to make sense of the challenges that come into our lives. Like the Shepherd guides the sheep, it is the Shepherd who guides us as well.

The Shepherd is with us in those moments when we become numb by pain of death. When the wintery blast of loss chills our souls, it is then that the Shepherd announces His presence, not with a loud shout, but with a soft and gentle touch that makes you feel His presence and His love. It is in the verses that follow that the writer gives us more comfort, because it is here that the writer announces the full and complete presence of God in our lives. When the greatest enemy approaches, the writer writes, **"I will fear no evil for Thy rod and Thy staff are with me."** The power I need to defeat my adversary is walking beside me. The power I need to get up when life has knocked me down is walking beside me. The power I thought was far away has announced itself by giving me a peace that I have never had before. It is in this place of peace and solace that the writer places us and announces, **"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever."** This is made clear by the previous verse that tells the complete story: **"My cup runneth over."** This says it all. Everything I will ever need will be supplied to me. This is not a Psalm that you just read. It is a Psalm that must become a part of you. It is a Psalm that should encourage each of us to know the Shepherd in His fullness. You won't find this relationship by knowing the Psalm. It only comes when you know the Shepherd.

There is a story that illustrates this very well: An old man and a young man were on the same stage before a vast audience. Each was to say the words of the 23rd Psalm. The young man was trained in speech techniques and drama. He spoke with great eloquence and when he was seated, the audience gave him a standing ovation. The audience requested an encore so they might hear the Psalm once again. The old man got up afterward and walked to the podium on his cane. He began with a shaky voice, **"The Lord is my Shepherd..."** and he continued until he finished. As he sat down there was not a dry eye in the room. The audience seemed to be in prayer. The young man stood up and made this statement: **"Truly we have witnessed something we should never forget. I knew the Psalm. This man knows the Shepherd."**

Make sure you know the Shepherd.

Make sure you know the Shepherd.

Make <u>sure</u> you know the Shepherd.

Peace and Blessings to you all,

Pastor Gool