

Mixtape: Repeat

June 5, 2016

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Psalm 23

“Mixtapes” are playlists we create. All kinds of mixtapes. The Psalms are like mixtapes. It’s a collection of songs that speak to a person’s various emotions and give them expression. We’ll be looking at some of David’s Psalms through June.

We start today with the most famous, Psalm 23 (KJV)

We need to keep things in context when reading the Bible. The Psalms are difficult to read because they don’t have much continuity to them. The Psalms deal with “the inner life.” There many emotions in it. It’s by-polar in nature. It has passion: anger, despair, desire for justice, joy, kindness and love.

Ps. 22:1 “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?”

Ps 23 is the Psalm you want playing in your head over and over again. Keeping context, look at what follows. **Ps 24:1 “The earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it...** Life is like this – highs and lows, roller-coaster. On Tuesday night this week, our Annual Conference shared in a wonderful worship service for our Bishop Hayes’ retirement. Our choir/orchestra played. It was amazing. You’d have been so proud. They truly led us in worship. The Psalmist would’ve been delighted. On Wednesday morning I was shocked to learn that on their return trip to Tulsa that an Asbury shuttle broke down. Some of our folks didn’t get home until 2 a.m. It made me think of the Psalms. How wonderful Ps 23/24 are. There’s the “My God, My God, Why have you forsaken me” event of sitting on the Turner Turnpike after having done good – and then everything is disrupted.

If we live long enough (like about 5 minutes)...life will be disrupted. A baby doesn’t emerge from the womb saying: “Hey everybody – I’m here. Where’s the food?” We are born protesting our disruption from our warm/cozy place.

June 5 Psalm 23 KJV

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. ² He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. ³ He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. ⁴ Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. ⁵ Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. ⁶ Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

The Lord - not me. **is** - present tense. Not past/future tense **my** – personal **shepherd** This means I'm a sheep. *Ps 100:3 Know that the Lord is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.* I've not grown up around sheep. We didn't keep any in our backyard at Harvard/Haskell. There are about 2 things that I know about sheep.

#1.) Whether singular or plural, they are called "sheep" (not "sheeps")

#2.) They are supposed to be incredibly stupid animals. They can't take care of themselves. That's why the Bible call us sheep and not cows. You can turn horses or cows loose and not worry about them except in certain situations. Not so with sheep. Sheep are easily lost. They don't pay attention. They nibble and nibble, eating from one tuft of grass to another with no awareness of their surroundings. If you've ever seen a squirrel or a bird eat they are constantly looking around – constantly vigilant about what's going on. Not so with a sheep. Isaiah 53:6 *We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way* A lost sheep in the Middle East is pathetic. Often a lost sheep will sit down, usually in a shelter at a place that's immediately available and will start shaking and bleating. It gets so nervous it may not be able to stand. It can't walk or be led. It won't respond to the shepherd's call. It's immobilized and paralyzed. The shepherd must carry the poor thing on his shoulders. The animal can weigh 70 pounds. The country is rugged. It's the mark of strength, courage and the character of a shepherd that he rejoices when he finds it. The burden of restoration is on the shepherd.

I shall not want – I shall not want another shepherd. I belong to Him. This is about our relationship with God. We get into trouble when we desire other things more than we desire the Good Shepherd. When we forget or neglect the Shepherd, our "wanter" goes wild. It's the illusion: "If only I had.....then I'd be happy." "I need a bigger house, a pay raise, a new car." Sometimes we really need things...there's nothing wrong with having stuff. The problem is when "stuff has us" and we believe the lie that we are merely material beings. We are far more than that! This is about finding contentment. Being content is not eliminating goals or not having ambition, but it's about being at peace where I am today in my present circumstances.

God PROVIDES for and PROTECTS me

Look at all the benefits of having the Lord as our shepherd:

It's not easy to get a sheep to lie down in **green pastures**. Sheep refuse to lie down unless 4 requirements are met. (1) They must be free from all fear. (2) There must be no tension between members of the flock. In every animal society there is an established order of dominance or status. In chickens, it is known as the pecking order. Among sheep it is called the butting order. Sheep maintain

their status by butting and driving away other sheep from their favorite grazing spot. When there is this tension in a flock, the sheep can't lie down and rest. They must always stand up and be ready to fight. (3) They must not be aggravated with flies or parasites. A particular problem sheep have is insects -- flies, mosquitoes, gnats. Sheep are especially bothered by the nose fly, or nasal fly. These flies buzz around the sheep's head trying to deposit eggs on the damp nose of the sheep. If they are successful, the eggs will hatch to form small worm-like larvae. They crawl up the sheep's nose and cause a great deal of aggravation. So, at the beginning of fly season, shepherds will mix up an oil concoction. In Palestine, they used a mixture of olive oil, sulphur and spices. It would then be applied to the heads of the sheep. Oil is also used to cure scab, which is a highly contagious disease among sheep. This is just another way of saying, "Our Lord takes care of us." (4) And they must be free from hunger.

The result is that it wears the sheep out, they lose weight and become irritable. But whenever the shepherd is around, they forget their rivalries and stop their fighting.

Gets **water** (70% of the animal = water) Lack of it = dehydration.

Restores my soul – we are more than just physical beings. Sometimes we get worn out

Leads me in Righteousness – we have to be led in new ways, else we get caught up into bad habits/practices.

Even in difficult times. Through valley of the shadow of death.

John 10:7-13 Therefore Jesus said again, "I tell you the truth, I am the gate for the sheep. All who ever came before me were thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full. "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand is not the shepherd who owns the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.

Jesus is this Good Shepherd who both provides for and protects His sheep. Who will be my shepherd? The Lord? Me? The hired hand? (not committed to the sheep) The wolf? (wolf can get into bad stuff)

Jesus is the Good Shepherd who laid down His life for the sheep. The shepherd paid the price to carry the sheep back to safety. If it's not found it will die. The sheep is completely helpless.

For centuries the Christian churches of the Middle East would not use the cross as a symbol of worship – it was too barbaric and horrifying. It would be like using a guillotine in France or an electric chair in America. The early Christians chose an alternative to the cross as a symbol for the atonement. It was the good shepherd carrying a large sheep home over his shoulders.

Maybe you've never known the Good Shepherd. Maybe you have, but you've wandered away because you've been wanting something else. Jesus is on a mission – to reach all of us with His love. It's time to come home. Either we allow God to be our shepherd or we don't.

Whoever is the boss or the master in your life will determine your destiny.

It's wonderful to know Psalm 23. We hope it's part of the song that you play in your head over and over again. But it's far more important that we know the Shepherd. Have you trusted Him?

How do I do it? It's very simple. Ask. Ask the Shepherd to come into your heart, to forgive you of your sins, and to give you eternal life.