

Calvary Chapel of El Paso Ladies' Bible Study: Psalm 23
April 12, 2022 – Lesson 1 – The Good Shepherd

John 10:11 I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.

Jesus Christ, The Good Shepherd

God incarnate spoke the words in *John 10:11*. Who is this? Christ the Lord, who is part of the Godhead – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit:

God the Father – originator of all that exists – He first thought of it in His mind.

God the Son – the creator, the artisan – our Saviour – He brought it into being.

God the Holy Spirit – the power that brought it about, and the one who gives us understanding of it.

How does the Lord work in our lives, personally ministering to each one of us?

Father – conceives it in His mind.

Son – His work makes it possible.

Holy Spirit – confirms it and makes it real to us.

So “the Lord is my shepherd” implies a profound yet practical working relationship between us and our Maker.

Shepherd and his sheep – special relationship

Sheep – completely dependent on the shepherd – need constant care and direction.

Shepherd – his nature greatly affects the sheep – we have a good shepherd! – and we belong to Him:

1. Created the whole universe, including us, so He is our owner and manager.

2. When mankind went astray, He paid the price of His life to redeem us, so in this greater way we belong to Him because He purchased us with His own blood.

Isaiah 53:6 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

John 10:11 I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.

3. Christ daily lays Himself out for us – intercedes for us, guides us, and works on our behalf

Psalm 23 details the complete care that our Shepherd gives to us.

The behavior of sheep and people is very similar, as well as the care they need. Only our Lord can give that love and care.

John 10:12-15:

12 But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep.

13 The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep.

14 I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine.

15 As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep.

From pp. 21-22 of “A Shepherd Looks at Psalms,” by W. Phillip Keller:

“In memory I can still see one of the sheep ranches in our district which was operated by a tenant sheepman. He ought never to have been allowed to keep sheep. His stock were always thin, weak and riddled with disease or parasites. Again and again they would come and stand at the fence staring blankly through the woven wire at the green lush pastures which my flock enjoyed. Had they been able to speak I am sure they would have said, “Oh, to be set free from this awful owner!”

“This is a picture which has never left my memory. It is a picture of pathetic people the world over who have not know what it is to belong to the Good Shepherd...who suffer instead under sin and Satan.”

The author goes on to say that these people misunderstand the nature of Christ – they think He’s a tyrant, not the Good Shepherd.

There may be someone listening to this lesson who has never come into the pasture of the Good Shepherd – or you may know someone who is in that state, someone with whom you can share these truths. I don't know another's heart, but I do know that I was in that state – hungry and thirsty and didn't know what I needed. I had never made Jesus Lord of my life, never truly accepted Jesus into my heart. When I did at the age of 27 – what a difference! Finally I knew who was my Master, the Good Shepherd. I was still a confused little lamb, and I had to follow after the sheep who knew the Master's voice, but I was in the right pasture! Some of us are new Christians and still have lots to learn, but you're in with the Good Shepherd's sheep. Just keep feeding, drinking and growing. However, if any of you are not sure – talk to one of us teachers or another Christian who can explain it to you. It's best to make sure of your salvation and know that from this day forward you are sure you belong to Jesus, the Good Shepherd.

We will spend the next few weeks learning of the Good Shepherd's care for His sheep. I want you to be sure you are His sheep. And, I want you to be able to share this with others.

The Shepherd in scripture

The Shepherd of Israel: *Psalm 80:1 Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, thou that leadest Joseph like a flock; thou that dwellest between the cherubims, shine forth.*

He dwells between the cherubim, which is the place of God in the holy of holies.

He will regather Israel: *Jeremiah 31:10 Hear the word of the LORD, O ye nations, and declare it in the isles afar off, and say, He that scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him, as a shepherd doth his flock.*

He has other sheep besides Israel, and will make all of them one flock: *John 10:16 And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.*

His gentle care: *Isaiah 40:11 He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.*

The Good Shepherd: *John 10:14 I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine.*

The Great Shepherd: *Hebrews 13:20 Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant,
21 Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.*

The Shepherd and Bishop of your souls: *1 Peter 2:25 For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.*

The Chief Shepherd – when He comes for us: *1 Peter 5:4 And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.*

OVERVIEW OF PSALM 23

A Shepherd Looks at Psalms, by W. Phillip Keller

This book takes one through Psalm 23 verse by verse, based on how sheep and their shepherd live through the course of a year. Keller was a sheepman for a number of years and speaks from personal experience. It is longer than Slemming's book and is a very good book.

A constant theme is how much the sheep have to be managed and cared for in every detail.

Well managed and cared for – the best livestock for the land.

Not well managed and cared for – the worst!

How much we people are like that.

If sheep are left to themselves, they follow the same trails until they are ditches, eat at the same spot 'til it is dusty ground, eat bad food, drink dirty water, stay restless and fearful, are plagued by pests and diseases – and do not know what else to do.

What a contrast to the Good Shepherd's care.

Verses 1-3 – on the home pasture lands before summer – all was provided and constant care was given.

v.2 – lie down – couldn't unless all was well.

still waters – clean and good – even included dew.

v.3 - meets their needs and leads them where they should go – not just stay in a rut where they will waste away... This modern day shepherd would take his flock from one pasture to another on his home ranch, keeping them fed and watered so they could become strong enough for the journey to the rich high summer fields.

Verse 4 – the only way to the high ground was through shady, narrow, threatening valleys.

The rod – protection, a short club.

The staff – hook on a long stick – to pull sheep from danger, to guide.

Verse 5 – this table is a mesa, a broad, rich field.

The shepherd had to prepare it by clearing it of hidden snakes and weeds, and even planting good grasses.

On the surrounding hills predators watched, but the shepherd kept the sheep safe.

Oil – the shepherd rubbed it on the sheep's head for protection and health.

Truly, for these sheep, their cup runneth over.

Verses 1-5 express the care of the Shepherd for His sheep.

Verse 6a tells of the fruit in the sheep's life:

Goodness and mercy for him,

And even more, wherever we go, goodness and mercy are left behind.

Verse 6b declares the great eternal promise that we will dwell with the Lord forever.

He Leadeth Me, by C. W. Slemming

[This book was written in 1942. At the time, "Palestine" meant the Holy Land of Israel. So Slemming used this instead of "Israel" when referring to the Holy Land. (In 1947 Israel again became a nation, and its leaders gave the nation its rightful name.)]

This book follows the day of a shepherd and his sheep from morning to night. It is closer to the ways of shepherds of Bible times in some of the details. They did have a home "ranch," but were out in the wilderness more. They spent their nights in the sheepfold, a fence with one opening where the shepherds took turns guarding the sheep – as the "door." In the morning each shepherd would call, and his sheep would follow him out, with the little lambs following the sheep.

Lesson 2 – Details about the shepherd, including how he was dressed and what was his equipment.

One example: the oil he carried was not only a salve for health, but it was also an insect and snake repellent. Our Lord anoints us with the Holy Spirit (symbolized by oil) for our spiritual health and for our protection.

Lesson 3 – As the day starts, the shepherd leads the sheep out

They follow because they know his voice

The sheep need to be led

Good paths

For His Name's sake

Lesson 4 – (1) After they've gone a little way, the shepherd makes them lie down in green pastures – so they will rest for what is ahead. (2) "He restoreth my soul" – we will look at those times we need restoring and how our Lord does it.

Lesson 5 – By noonday the sheep have reached the high mesas. They are hot, thirsty, and hungry.

Still waters – the shepherd provides this, often by making a hollow by the stream, or by dipping clean water from the rushing stream – how the Lord's love and presence, and His Word, bless us when He provides it in a way that we can receive it!

A table... - a rich banquet right in front of their enemies

The Lord provides for us:

Our daily bread

The Holy Scriptures

The Lord's Table

Lesson 6 – Dangers and valleys

The shepherd watched over his sheep to protect them from the many types of dangers they faced in the wilderness

He was there with them through every valley – to protect and comfort them

Lesson 7 – At day's end they came back to the sheepfold. The shepherd counted them, inspecting each one to make sure all was well with each.

If one was missing, he took his lamp and searched until he found it. As he returned, all his friends rejoiced with Him over his found sheep.

Lesson 8 – We are so greatly blessed as God's sheep, and we will be with Him forever.

So as we look at the Good Shepherd, *Psalm 23:1* sums it up:

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

How do we live this out daily?

Hebrews 13:5 Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.

"conversation" = life style, manner

"content" = satisfied, never wanting "just a little more"

Why can we live this way? Because HE is always there with us.

And our future?

*Surely goodness and mercy
shall follow me all the days of my life:
and I will dwell
in the house of the LORD for ever.
Psalm 23:6*

