

Psalm 23
“Assurance in God”

Introduction

As lent is coming to a close, I wanted to remind us of who our faith is in as Christians and the attitude we are to have as Christians. We have an assurance through Christ that we have eternal security in Him. Every generation sees change throughout their years. Many of you have lived when technology was almost nonexistent, and here we are in 2025 with cell phones that have more computing power than the computer that put man on the moon. We have the ability to communicate with people on the other side of the planet in real time. Not letters or postcards, but face-to-face contact with other living human beings. With all of these advances in technology, and those are just a few of the thousands of examples, our assurances can decrease. In the case of the modern car, sixty years ago there was no computer chip that would cause concern for a vehicle not running right. Today, that is one of the many failure points when diagnosing a misbehaving car.

With humanity, we have uneven assurance at best and no assurance at worst. But with God, we have an eternal assurance through Jesus Christ’s finished work on the cross. Centuries before Jesus walked the earth, David penned a psalm to God’s glory about the assurance we have in our Shepherd and king. If you have your Bibles turn with me to Psalm 23 and stand if you can as we honor God’s word.

Sermon

For most of us here, I am sure we have heard this psalm preached time and time again. One of my pastor friends said this is his go-to psalm when doing funerals. For other people, this is a psalm they recite when they are going through difficulty. A while back, I was flying on a

plane, and we hit some turbulence. Nothing too bad, but I already have a fear of flying so any turbulence is terrible in my mind. As I am sitting in my seat, the words of psalm 23 begin to come into my head. I recited and prayed this psalm over and over until calmness came over me. The turbulence was not fully over, but I felt more at peace in that situation. There is something about this psalm that gives believers peace in life.

We will be looking at that peace tonight as we look again at the beginning of this psalm. **“The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.”**¹ How much more direct could David have been here by calling God our shepherd? David wrote this psalm either in the 11th or 10th century B.C. That means about a thousand years before Christ came, David was calling God our shepherd. In the heavily agricultural society that was Israel, they would have understood the significance of calling God our shepherd. We may miss some of that nuance today, but the meaning should not remain hidden from our western eyes. Shepherds would watch over their flock, keep them safe, and care for them. David being a shepherd by trade understood the metaphor that he used to describe our King. The ultimate assurance that we have is our Shepherd, to which Jesus even stated that He is the “Good Shepherd.” In this assurance, the psalmist said that he shall not want. Simply put, with God we have all that we need. We may want things, but we need God. The shepherd of the flock keeps the flock safe. As we will see, the shepherd cares for the flock and keeps the flock safe.

Verse one begins the three-fold testimony of the psalmist towards God. David wrote about how the Lord assures our salvation, and David wrote how he will testify of God’s goodness. **“He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside quiet waters.”**² The Lord provides all that we need. Lying down in green pastures may seem odd to us, but for a flock

¹ Psalm 23:1

² Psalm 23:2

of sheep this means much. Sheep eat what? They eat grass. After traveling, the shepherd in this psalm is leading the sheep to a place of plenty, that is green pastures. The sheep are able to be nourish and have an abundance of food during their stay. They can eat and eat and eat. They have what they need. Beyond food, they also have water. Not any water, but quiet waters. These waters are not raging, but are restful. See God provides what you need and what we need, apart from food is peace. God's peace, to be exact.

About a month ago, the folks at Franklin Union studied a passage out of Colossians 3 which told us to have God's peace. This passage here is telling us that God is offering His peace as well. What is more peaceful than the sound of a quiet stream as you rest? The rhythmic sound of water can calm even the most distressed person. It certainly calms my newborn. There is much nuance to this passage as the Hebrew word used here does not just mean quiet to how we understand it, but it has a deeper meaning of rest and security. Sheep are dependent on their shepherd. He is the one who leads them places to eat, through dangerous areas, but also places to find rest. Now, most humans sleep with both eyes open. I say most because there was one road trip when I was a lot younger that I saw one of my sisters sleeping with one eye open looking at me. Freaked me out as we traveled back home. But, when you sleep you are vulnerable. You go into a coma-like state. That is why when you are awoken from a deep REM sleep, you feel disoriented and confused. These sheep would have trusted the shepherd with their lives. David trusted the Lord with his life on many occasions. Both while he was a shepherd, while he was on the run from King Saul, and while he was king of Israel.

The Lord keeps us safe and guards us. He leads us to His protection. **“He restores my soul; He guides me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake.”**³ Daily, the Lord is

³ Psalm 23:3

patient with us and renews us. There are days where we are beaten down from seemingly everything around us. Whether work was especially difficult, there is trouble in our homelife, or physical/mental illness is plaguing us, some days are beyond arduous. But the Lord restores our soul, He gives us strength to continue on. He does this by guiding us down the path of righteousness for His name's sake. God knows what is right and what is wrong. Being the Creator of the universe and the moral standard, He knows what a good decision is and what is a bad mistake. By us following our shepherd and not deviating from the path, we are following His lead.

By His revealed character, we are brought to safety through whatever hardship we may face. We will face hardships, that is one of the facts of life. Do not be discouraged by this fact, but encouraged that you will not walk it alone. **“Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.”**⁴ There is the second example of the testimony that David brought about God's goodness. Think about the valley of the shadow of death; thing about that imagery and what comes to mind. The verse before were about the good times and all that God provides. God's goodness extends far beyond the good times as He stands with us through the bad. In Psalm 139, David asked the question of where he can go that is away from God's presence. The answer is nowhere. There is nowhere we can go where God is not. Even in the darkest times of our lives, God is there with us if we let Him be.

Everything up to verse four has been the psalmist letting God lead. But when we forsake God, we are treated to the darkness of the world alone. Jesus gave the world the opportunity to come to Him and He gives that opportunity for everyone here tonight to come to Him. Jesus

⁴ Psalm 23:4

Christ died on the cross for our sins to give us salvation and to take our place in the judgment that we all deserve. That is why Jesus is the Good Shepherd, because He laid down His life for His flock. Jesus is the God we have been talking about tonight in Psalm 23. He is our shepherd and our guide only if we let Him be. He provides all that we need and sees us through the dark times in our lives. Whether we are on earth or with Him, He loves and cares for us and gives all of those who come to Him the opportunity to be called sons of God, children of the inheritance of the Most High.

It is a bold statement that we will fear no evil for God is with us. His rod, which is His protection keeps us safe, and His staff supports us through that engagement. How remarkable a thing it is that the very Creator of the cosmos desires a relationship with us. In this relationship, He prepares a table for us, but it goes beyond that. **“You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You have anointed my head with oil; My cup overflows.”**⁵ In the Near East, which is geographically what this region is called, hospitality required far more than a meal. It also required protection from those seeking to harm your guests. If you allowed your guests to be killed, they would no longer be your guests then, would they? But God prepares us a table in the presence of our enemies, meaning those who oppose God. He keeps us safe and even demonstrates this as He anoints our head. In the Near East, it was customary that the host would anoint the head of his guest with oil before they began eating. Imagine when we go downstairs to enjoy some food if your head needed to be anointed before you sat down. But that is the mark that God hospitality and grace that God gives us. David concluded this verse with the statement that his cup overflows. God gives us more than we deserve and our cup overflows from God’s goodness and love towards us. The Lord’s generosity is of note in this psalm.

⁵ Psalm 23:5

After all of this, David then offered a final statement about the Lord and his testimony about God. **“Surely goodness and lovingkindness will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.”**⁶ Our final testimony from David is the **“I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.”** To think that all of this goodness is only a taste of what heaven is like. David provides an encouraging statement here that surely God’s provision will remain with us all the days of our lives until we are with Him forever. Jesus confirmed this again a thousand years later as He said that He was going to prepare for us a place with Him forever.

As Lent is coming to an end, our knowledge of God’s assurance of salvation does not end. That fact remains forever. In a time where we have very little assurance, understand the assurance that we have in God. If we submit ourselves to Christ, then we have His assurance for our lives. Follow the risen Savior and trust in His calling. Let us pray.

⁶ Psalm 23:6