

Psalm 23
05-05-19 PM

Psalm 23 is probably the most well-known Psalm in the book. It is used at funerals as a sign of our confidence in God. It does related our confidence in God's providence in multiple areas; in our needs, in our hearts, and even in life or death. As well, it is a praise for the blessings of God.

Why does David speak about God as a shepherd? First, we need to consider the characteristics of a shepherd, and how they are spiritual in nature. First, fundamentally a shepherd is one who loves the sheep (Isaiah 40:11). A shepherd lives among the sheep; the sheep become dear to the shepherd. Many parables teach that even one that strays will be sought by the loving shepherd. T

Second, a shepherd is also one who protects the sheep. David described himself like this to Saul in 1 Samuel 17:34-35. A shepherd knows the dangers that may come, and first seeks to protect the sheep. That is the primary purpose, to fight for the sheep.

Third, a shepherd is one who leads the sheep to food (John 21:17). In the Psalm David spoke of being led to green pastures and still waters. This is the work of a shepherd, to bring them to pasture. When that pasture is finished, a shepherd finds new pasture for them.

This was the desire of God for Israel, that His kings would be shepherd kings of Israel. God said to David in 2 Samuel 5:2 "You will shepherd My people Israel, and you will be a ruler over Israel." David epitomized a Shepherd King, something stated well in Psalm 78:70-72: *"He also chose David His servant and took him from the sheepfolds; from the care of the ewes with suckling lambs He brought him to shepherd Jacob His people, and Israel His inheritance. So he shepherded them according to the integrity of his heart."*

Consider how this type of leadership contrasts with other types of leadership. It is no the authoritarian style, an autocratic leadership, not is it a free-reign / anything goes leadership. It is not the personality leadership of someone charismatic. This is a leadership that comes from the right heart. Shepherd Leaders love the sheep and are one of them. Shepherd leaders protect the sheep and feed them. Shepherd leaders watch the sheep and seek out the wanderers.

All of this leads us to a place that may have been clear from the beginning of the Psalm: Jesus was the Ultimate Shepherd King. In John 10:1-17 Jesus described Himself as the Good Shepherd. He qualified this to describe His great love for the sheep, and what He was prepared to do for them. Peter said in 1 Peter 2:25 *"For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls."*

This leadership is also bound into the overseers of the local church. They are called "Shepherd" (aka Pastor) along with elder and overseer in the New Testament. Peter said *"The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away"* (1 Peter 5:1-4).

The Lord is our Shepherd, we have no want or need. We need to know His voice; He speaks through His Word. We need to trust in Him. As well, we need to lead as shepherd leaders ourselves. Not just the elders among us, but all of us need to love one another as a shepherd loves sheep, and want to help keep each other safe, and to seek and save the straying and lost.