

Come Follow Me Podcast  
Elo Viz production  
Week 33  
Psalms 1-46

This week we start into the Book of Psalms. Psalms are a collection of Songs or hymns written by various authors. We know at least 73 of them came from King David and that there are 6 other small contributors or groups of contributors listed in the bible. (Asaph, Korah, Solomon, Moses, Ethan and Heman). We also know that there are 50 psalms orphaned. Meaning The writers are anonymous. Even though we don't know their names, what we do know is that the Psalms were an important part of worship among the Israelites, and we know that the Savior quoted them often. The writers seem to have had a window into our souls and seem to have found a way to express how we feel about God, what we worry about, and how we find peace.

Psalms were not written to rhyme or be thirithmatic. In Hebrew they wrote their Songs or Hymns with Ideas or thoughts. For example in Psalms 1:1-

“**Blessed** *is* the man that **walketh** not in the **counsel** of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the **scornful**.”

These are 3 thoughts or principles that build on each other. You will also see contrasting statements, this is also a common way they wrote songs like in verse 6:

“For the Lord knoweth the way of the **righteous**: but the way of the **ungodly** shall perish.”

The Psalms were meant to be read with an artistic mind. For someone logical like myself it is a little more difficult to understand. Think of it as more like abstract art. You know the kind you have to stare at for a while and tilt your head looking past what is on the canvas to what the artist was feeling as they made their creation.

One of the most quoted and memorized Psalms in the last 3000 years is Psalms 23. David, who was a shepherd, writes a short song of praise to the “true Shepherd”. One thing we may not realize is that this Psalm is used mostly at funerals and at times of loss and grief. Which may bring us comfort and peace as we ponder it. But, this Psalm was meant to be lived, everyday. It is meant to be felt and cherished.

David writes:

- 1 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.

The Symbolism is astonishing. David is speaking from experience about sheep and their shepherd. I'm not sure we realize how rich this parable is. Any sort of search on the behaviors of sheep will yield very quickly that sheep are very dumb animals. They are practically void of any self protection. And often get themselves into life threatening circumstances because of their lack of intelligence. I heard a story recently of a herd of about 400 sheep that were grazing on the top of a hill and the shepherd became distracted for a time. One of the sheep decided it

would be a good idea to jump off this cliff. What was more shocking is that all the rest of the sheep decided it was a good idea to follow that sheep. All 400 sheep jump off a cliff to their death. The report went on to say that they estimated the loss to be to the tune of over \$75,000. Sheep often get themselves into trouble or simply wander off. It's safe to say that without a shepherd sheep would literally not survive.

This is true of us as well. Without the life sustaining light of Christ that is in us we would not be able to draw a single breath. Also, without his protection we would be susceptible to all the fears that the world can throw at us. We all, whether we realize it or not, rely daily upon the Good Shepherd. And the Good Shepherd knows his sheep and calls them each by name. The scriptures teach us on multiple accounts that the Savior will often leave the ninety and nine and go after the one which is lost. He does so because of His love for each of His sheep...each of us.

In this Psalm David is making a bold and powerful statement: The Lord in MY shepherd (semicolon), remember that this means that what comes next is because of what was just stated. Because the Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. David gets it. When we rely on and trust in the Lord, we have all that we need. We will not be found wanting if we turn to Him, put our faith in Him.

He asks that we follow him. And when we do He will lead us to green pastures, and to still waters. He restoreth our souls and leads us in the paths of righteousness. Isn't that what we want? Think about that for a second. If you were to be offered 2 choices, ponder which one you would choose. The world teaches us that parties, fame, fortune, drugs, power, control. Those are the things that make life exciting and worthwhile. Have you ever met someone with that lifestyle? Are they really happy? Are they ever at peace? This is what the world is promising you. Come have all these things...and come be miserable with us. The old adage is true; misery surely does love company.

What David is singing about I believe is more of what we are truly seeking in this life; Green pastures, sweet pure streams, peace in our souls and joy in His righteousness. When you meet someone that is living this way you can truly say that they are not wanting in any way. They have all that they need and so much more. Notice that when you meet these people that there is a burning in your soul to have a life like they have. Void of fear and worry. Just peace and happiness no matter what the circumstance.

Verse 4 says: "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."

He is not speaking of physical death here, he is telling about his sorrow and pain in this mortal life. David is saying. Whatever it is that I go through good or bad, I will fear no Evil. When Jesus is on our side, or more correctly said: when we are on His side, there is no force that can even come close to us, because He is our shepherd. And His rod and staff are our defense.

The rod and a staff it is referring to are two common tools used by shepherds. The staff was used to lead and guide the sheep. It is a long wooden stick that has a hook or a crook on the end. It is used to keep them on the proper path they were traveling. The rod was a short heavy club used to defend the sheep. Sometimes it would have nails sticking out of the end. When a wolf or lion would come to attack the flock the shepherd would defend his sheep with

his rod. If we are the sheep I'm sure we would be comforted under the hand of the master's rod and staff. But this phase feels a little different than feeling comforted because the Lord defends and protects us. Listen again carefully to how this is worded: "I will fear no **evil**: for thou *art* with me; thy rod and thy staff they **comfort** me."

When we read this we don't really get the image of God standing there with a club or a rod in his hand ready to defend off the dragons or demons... It's different. It reminds me of the temple when we see the adversary striving to destroy Adam and Eve. Tempting and prodding them to disobey Father. After they are found hiding from Him and questioning what Lucifer has been doing, God curses the adversary and commands him to depart. There was no fighting, no clubs, no dual. It was by the power of His word that all was made right. It was by His word that the worlds are and were created. It was by His word that this Earth stays in orbit. It is by His word that we are saved. His rod and His staff are his word and they comfort us.

There is a well known story about this very principle:

Years ago the great actor Richard Burton was given a grand reception in his childhood parish. While replying to the complimentary speeches in the parish auditorium he asked if there was anything they specially wanted to hear from him. After a minute's pause his old pastor asked him if he could recite the Good Shepherd Psalm (Psalm 23), which he had taught Burton in his Sunday school.

A strange look came over the actor's face. He paused for a moment, and then said, "I will, on one condition—that after I have recited it, you, my pastor and teacher will do the same."

"I," said the old, retired pastor, "am not an actor, but, if you wish it, I shall do so."

Impressively the actor began the Psalm. His voice and intonation were perfect. He held his audience spellbound, and, as he finished, a great burst of applause broke from the audience.

As it died away, the old pastor rose from his wheelchair and began to recite the same Psalm. His voice was feeble and shivering and his tone was not faultless. But, when he finished, there was not a dry eye in the room.

The actor rose and his voice quivered as he said, "Ladies and gentlemen, I reached your eyes and ears, but my old pastor has reached your hearts. The difference is just this: I know the Psalm, but he knows the Shepherd."

<http://holyredeemerpei.com/i-know-the-psalm-but-he-knows-the-shepherd/>

This week as we study may we come to know not only the Psalm but more importantly may we come to know the Shepherd.

In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.