



January 22, 2020

Psalm 23: A Brief Meditation

(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. (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 for ever. - (Psalm 23, KJV)

Psalm 23 is one of those great, wonderful passages of writing that could not possibly have been made up by human ingenuity alone. Our minds do not naturally run at these kinds of heights. Some stories are so real they could never have been made up; the words of the psalmist, David, are like that. They express the experience of a man whose life was rugged, but who came to know the overflowing richness of Yahweh in the midst of it.

Earlier, we dwelt on the attributes of God—that completely self-sufficient, eternal being who makes covenant promises with individual human beings. David knew those promises and walked in them, having seen the hand of God in his own life. He experienced firsthand the lavish sufficiency of God in such a way that it simply didn't matter what else happened. Nothing could rob him of the full provision he found in the active and conversational relationship in which he lived with God. Absolutely nothing. In fact, it seems almost everything did happen to him: shunned by his family, envied and hated by King Saul, enemies breathing down his neck, and years spent hiding in caves. A failure—and all the while he had an intimate relationship with God. The boy who went out and slew Goliath still knew times of great testing afterward.

This psalm reflects David's personal relationship with God, and it is within this kind of relationship that a life without lack is known. You can have that kind of relationship and life, as fully as it can be imagined. That is the reason for these devotionals. What is described in the Twenty-Third Psalm is not something reserved for a few peculiar people we read about in the Bible. It is an expression of God's intent for every human being. Everyone. And from the human side, the life without lack is simply a matter of having one's mind fully and constantly fixed upon God as he is, confident that he will provide everything that we need.

As mentioned earlier, this relates directly to why, in what is known as the Lord's Prayer, the very first petition is, "Hallowed be your name." It might be helpful to reword this verse to, "may your name be cherished and loved" so as to better capture the fullness of its meaning.

In John 17:6 we are told that Jesus revealed the name of the Father to his disciples. This means that he let them truly know who God is, because biblically the name of God brings with it the reality of God. It is interesting to see the similarity between some of David's prayers and the Lord's Prayer. Jesus and David both knew the hand of God in their lives. Jesus, of course, knew it in a more profound way, because by his hand water turned to wine, the blind were made to see, the raging sea was calmed, the dead were raised, and the poor heard good news.

Practice: *Take a moment to pause, rest in the truth that God is so much greater than anything we see around us. Next, rejoice in our God who has no comparison, celebrate the blessing of living in a world that is upheld and cared for by our totally competent and generous God. Then, ask Him to shepherd and direct you into a life without lack. And finally, yield to the ways he will seek to make this a reality in your life.*