

Sermon: Psalm 23 in Historical Context; Date: May 7, 2017

Delivered by: Dr. Greg Thornbury, president, The King's College, New York City

Bible text explored: Psalm 23

¹The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

²He makes me lie down in green pastures.
He leads me beside still waters.

³He restores my soul.
He leads me in paths of righteousness
for his name's sake.

⁴Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil,
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff,
they comfort me.

⁵You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.

⁶Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever. [ESV]

Review and application:

Dr. Thornbury said that for such a favorite passage, "familiarity breeds . . . familiarity." This could cause us to miss what it conveyed to Israelites of semi-nomadic background living in an arid environment.

1. If the LORD is a shepherd (v.1), what do you picture? (See, for example, *Isa.40:11*.)
If he is *our* shepherd, what does that make *us*?
What is the nature of sheep, as opposed, say, to goats?
2. This verse could be rendered, "Because the Lord is my shepherd, my needs are all cared for." How is being content as a follower-type sheep radically counter-cultural?
Am I willing to let my Shepherd shape what it is that I actually desire?
3. Why (vv. 2-3) is an image of lush meadows and peaceful streams wide of the mark?
How does our Shepherd guide us to elusive sources of forage and water?
Why was living in an environment of scarcity good for the wilderness wanderers and good for us? (See *Deut. 2:7*.)
Rather than placing reliance on my long-term planning, am I willing to trust the LORD for his day-to-day provision?
4. How (v. 4) are we protected even when unable to discern our way forward?
How could Jesus both say that he is the good shepherd and the sheepfold gate?
(See *John 10:7-10 and 14-15*.)
5. Can you identify with the shifted image (vv. 5-6) of a harassed fugitive in the desert being welcomed, sheltered, and treated with lavish hospitality?
6. Dr. Thornbury summed up the message of Psalm 23 as God living and dying on our behalf so that we might be fed. Take time now to thank God for your cup full to the brim with blessings and for the prospect of living in his house forever.

Query: Does your small group meet during the summer (from June 11 to the end of August) and review the sermon-based questions? If so, would you reply to this e-mail, confirming that. This will help us gauge the value of maintaining this service during those weeks. Thanks for your feedback.