

PSALM 23

The Lord is my Shepherd

Sermon-Based Study Guide
Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church
Psalm 23.1 | June 7, 2020
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I. Introduction to this Series and Study

This Sunday we begin a summer sermon series in Psalm 23. "Just one psalm, all summer!?" you may be thinking. Yes! Just one psalm, all summer. Just six verses over the course of 13 weeks.

In so doing, I trust we will uncover the richness and beauty that has inspired faith in the Good Shepherd for countless people through the past 3000 years. What's more, we will see clearly the character of our God and who we are as his sheep.

II. Connecting with One Another

Imagine talking with a young child. "What is God like?" they ask.

How would you respond?

How would you respond differently to people of other ages?

III. Study the Text

a. Spend a few minutes reading and reflecting on **Psalm 23**.

Time permitting, reread it in a few different translations. What similarities do you see? What differences? Which version do you prefer? Why?

b. This week, we're digging into the opening phrase, "The Lord is my shepherd."

How close is the metaphor of God as "shepherd" to your answer above?

What do you think of God being your shepherd? What does that mean to you?

c. This psalm starts not with who we are, but who *God* is (not who God was or who God *will be*, but who God *is*). Though King David was a shepherd himself (see **1st Samuel 16.1-13**), in Psalm 23 *God* is the shepherd.

Why do you think it's important that the Psalm starts with God?

d. "Lord" in English is the Hebrew name Yahweh, considered so holy that Jews would not say it aloud. Instead, they substituted "Adonai" or "Jehovah" in its place.

What do you think of that idea? Should we have more reverence for God's name?

e. Read **Exodus 3.1-15**.

Verse 14 is where we read the name Yahweh. How does your English bible translate that verse?



In that culture, to know the name of a deity meant having access to the power of that deity. Is Yahweh's power given to Moses?

- f. The Bible reveals that God is all powerful, all knowing, and always present. Robert Morgan writes, "What often is missing from our lives is the conception of God. We spend hours contemplating finances or projects or problems or family matters. We obsess over many stressful things, and then, to forget about them we pursue an array of diversions unmatched in history."

Do you agree? Is this true for you? When could you spend more time in God's presence and meditating on His Word? How could that affect your life?

- g. The 16th century reformer Martin Luther is credited with the saying, "The Christian faith is a matter of personal pronouns." We see a personal pronoun in the very first phrase: *my*. Personal pronouns make up around 25% of the whole psalm!

What is the difference between "The Lord is a shepherd" and "The Lord is *my* shepherd"? Do you remember when you first used that personal pronoun for God?

- h. In the Hebrew language, "friend" is derived from the word "shepherd." Ponder that for a moment in light of Psalm 23.1.

What's more, Jesus, the Good Shepherd who laid down his life for his sheep, calls us friends in **John 15.9-17**.

- i. Psalm 23 was written in a culture of nomadic shepherders (from which we derive the word shepherd). As such, God being a shepherd was an easy metaphor for the original audience to grasp.

What metaphor would you use today to communicate to *our* culture?

- j. Read **Luke 15.11-32**. How is Jesus the Good Shepherd?

IV. Pray

- a. Lift up the ongoing dissention and division throughout our country, that God's justice would be done and that Christ's peace would be received,
- b. Pray for those you know that have not welcomed God as *their* shepherd, and ask that the Holy Spirit would equip you with words that point them to Jesus.

V. Digging Deeper

- a. Engage other references to God as shepherd in Genesis 48.15, 49.24, Deuteronomy 32.6-12, Psalm 28.9, 74.1, 77.20, 78.52, 79.13, 80.1, 95.7, 100.3, Isaiah 40.11, Jeremiah 23.3, Ezekiel 34, Hosea 4.16, Micah 5.4, 7.14, and Zechariah 9.16. Why do you think this metaphor is so common in the Hebrew Scriptures?
- b. *Is* implies both existence and immediacy. See other examples in Genesis 28.16, Exodus 15.2, Deuteronomy 33.27, Psalm 27.1, Psalm 46.1, Habakkuk 2.19, John 6.35, 8.12, 10.9-11, 11.15 Romans 8.31, 1st Corinthians 1.9, 25, and 3.17, and 2nd Corinthians 9.8.

