

PSALM 23

You Prepare a Table

Sermon-Based Study Guide
Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church

Psalm 23.5 | August 9, 2020

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I. Introduction to this Study

Our summer series in Psalm 23 continues as we reflect on what it means to have the Lord, "*[You] prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies...*" Psalm 23 is a story of Good Shepherd and a Good Host.

Interesting question to consider: "*Here [verse 5 of Psalm 23], the reader is obliged to make an important decision. Is the psalmist still taking about a shepherd and his sheep, or does the imagery shift to a festive meal with a host and a guest?*"

Dr. Kenneth Bailey in his book, **The Good Shepherd: A Thousand Year Journey from Psalm 23 to the New Testament.**

Let us join in further reflection, study, and prayer as we continue to encounter the wondrous ways the Good Shepherd cares for our deepest, daily needs!

II. Connecting with One Another and Initial "Food for Thought"

+Begin by having two different people read Psalm 23 out loud. Take a minute after each reading to be still and reflect...Thoughts? New insights?

+Have you ever sat down to eat at a table that was "overflowing" with hospitality and food where you were treated (or simply felt like) an honored guest?

+What do you do in times of trouble and need: (a) Pray for God's restoration? (b) Turn to other people? (c) Go it on your own? (d) Retreat in frustration?

How do think the Lord wants you to respond?

+Share your thoughts on Max Lucado's statement: "*God is the Shepherd who guides, The Lord who provides, the Voice who brings peace in the Storm.*"

III. Study the Text ~ Psalm 23.5a

a. **You prepare a table before me.**

1. To "prepare a table" means "to prepare a meal". God prepares "food" for us. The Lord is a generous host and invites us to His table as His guests. What responses do you have with God wanting to provide you with nurture?
2. Picture yourself sitting at a banquet table prepared for you by God. Imagine yourself being loved and nurtured by God. What spiritual food do you sense God is offering you?
3. In verse 2, the psalmist speaks of food and drink for animals. Here in verse 5, the subject is food and drink for people. How does this connect or not



with your reading/interpretation of the text? Or, do you think “it really matters or not” if the psalmist is still talking about a shepherd and his sheep, or if the imagery is shifting to a festive meal with a host and a guest?

4. Hospitality at meals is a critical aspect of traditional Middle Eastern culture. Have you or anyone you know ever experience this blessing personally?

b. In the presence of my enemies.

1. The focus of what is affirmed here: The Lord demonstrates costly love to me irrespective of who is watching. God “feeds us” in the presence of our enemies. This meal is offered at a great cost. What enemies (perhaps spiritual) are you aware of in your life?

2. **Read Luke 15.11-32 - Parable of the prodigal son**

The banquet/celebration that so angers the older brother and surprises many of us...Think of it not as a gesture of “welcome back” to the prodigal son, but as a celebration of the favorable outcome of the costly efforts of the father in reconciling his son to himself. All of this takes place in front of a village who does not like the son and a brother, whose anger we are never told if he was able to let go of, in order to reconcile with his younger (prodigal) brother (so, we get to write the ending to the story)...In other words, from the prodigal son’s point of view, “my father ordered a huge banquet and celebration in the presence of my enemies...”

3. **Read Luke 19.1-10 - Story of Zacchaeus, the tax collector**

Jesus spends the night at the house of a tax collector. The crowd is furious and Jesus, by sharing a meal with Zacchaeus, gave rise to more hostility because of who He chooses to eat His meals with. Jesus demonstrates costly love to those around the table “in the presence of their enemies...”

4. Gospel (good) news! Jesus has crushed your enemy, the devil, (**Genesis 3.14-15**) and prepared a safe place for your soul to be nourished. Suppose in the place of your failure, the Good Shepherd invites you to a meal - have you heard, received, and RSVP’d to Jesus’ gracious, costly invitation?

IV. Pray

- a. Pray for a refreshment and rest from the Lord for your soul. How can others in your group be supporting you in prayer?
- b. Ask God to show you what are you consuming that is not satisfying to your soul. Ask God to increase your appetite for spiritual nurture. Ask God to increase your spiritual hunger.
- c. Pray for those who need the Lord’s provision in their lives - physically, spiritually, and emotionally.
- d. Pray for the ministry of Good Shepherd, that Godly wisdom would guide and direct our hearts and minds as we seek to invite all people to grow into a Christ-centered life in God's family during these unprecedented times of life and faith...

