

- **\*Read Psalm 23/Prayer\*** One of the most recognizable Psalms is that of Psalm 23. Now, whereas we would normally not pay too much attention to the Psalms before and after in order to gain a better image of the big picture of a psalm...this is one of those rare instances where looking at the Psalm before and the Psalm afterward can actually help us to see something really cool. Now, I don't know if the arranger of the Psalter meant to put these three Psalms in such an order, but they create for us a beautiful picture of Jesus Christ the Son of God. These 3 Psalms are highly messianic in nature, and they show for us three different sides of Jesus.
- **Psalm 22 shows us the Savior side of Jesus.** As David pens this prophetic Psalm of something that Jesus would say on the cross, he paints for us a picture of the suffering Savior and how he and we ultimately would praise Him and stand in awe of His matchless love. **Psalm 24 shows us the sovereign nature of Jesus.** He is King of kings and Lord of Lords. He is the King of glory and worthy of our devotion and worship. Then found between the two powerful Psalms is that of Psalm 23 which is often referred to as The Shepherd Psalm.
- If anyone were to pen a psalm about shepherding, surely the most logical choice would be David. He himself was a shepherd. **(II Samuel 7:8; I Chronicles 17:7)** The Lord said he was taken from the pasture where he followed and pastored sheep and was put in place as the king over God's people. David knew a thing or two about being a shepherd. He took that work seriously, and to some extent it prepared him for leading the people of God.
- Here in **Psalm 23**, we find David again writing a messianic Psalm that is referring to Jesus. By taking a step back and seeing the big picture of Scripture we cannot come to any other conclusion than the fact that Jesus is specifically the "Lord" referenced here in this text. Of course, this might seem a bit strange seeing as how David would never come face to face with Jesus in this life, but through the Spirit he was enabled to write this Psalm that would come to have such great meaning to us as Christians.
- We certainly recognize that Jesus is the Chief Shepherd of His people, the church. He is referred to as the Chief Shepherd in **I Peter 5:4** as Peter is instructing shepherds of a local church. In **John 10:1-16**, Jesus addresses Him as the good shepherd who would lay down His life for the sheep. Of course this is one of the great paradoxes of Scripture. It seems illogical to say that the same person is both shepherd and a lamb of sacrifice, but that is precisely who Jesus is. He fulfills both of these all important roles.
- This morning, I'd like for us to take some time to consider Jesus as the Chief Shepherd and how he operates within this role and the blessings that we gain from Him being our Shepherd as we go through this life as the sheep of His flock. Typically, to be called a sheep is not an endearing term. It is meant for the person who blindly follows someone. However, we will quickly come to recognize that there are great benefits that come with being a sheep within the flock of Jesus Christ, the Great Shepherd.

## **I. As the Chief Shepherd, Jesus seeks His sheep.**

### **A. A shepherd can't be a shepherd without sheep.**

1. I can't say that I am a shepherd because I don't own any sheep. I can't call myself a cattleman because I don't have any cows like my aunt does. I'm not a chicken man because unlike my uncle, I don't have hundreds of chickens to raise and care for.
2. So the first step in becoming a shepherd is to find some sheep to care for. But it isn't just that we own some sheep that truly would make us a shepherd, but a true shepherd actually spends time with his sheep. You might even begin to say that he smells like his sheep.
3. There is a fantastic book that speaks on the role of shepherds within the Lord's church that is entitled, "They Smell Like Sheep." The idea of this book is that elders within the Lord's churches actually behave as shepherds and they do so by being around the sheep. They smell like the sheep because they are constantly with the sheep. They are shepherds not because they are elders, but because they actually behave as such. They are shepherds because they care for their sheep.

### **B. Jesus came to this earth to seek men to become sheep within His flock.**

1. It is said in the prophecy concerning Jesus in **Isaiah 53** that like sheep we have gone astray. Then as Jesus stands upon the people in **Matthew 9:36** it says of Him that he had compassion upon the people for they were like sheep without a shepherd. We are exactly that. We are sheep without a shepherd. We are looking around in the world for someone to take us in and care for us.
2. We know well Jesus's words in **Luke 19:10** as He is with Zaccheus that He came to this world to seek and save that which was lost. He came to this world to find lost sheep. He came to this world to seek out those who are searching for a shepherd.
3. Jesus's words of **John 10:1-11** ought to resinate within our hearts because He came to this world to bring us into His fold. He came to bring us into His flock so that someone else wouldn't come and mistreat us and lead us to ruin, but He came so that we might have life and have it abundantly. He came because He loves, cares, and wants what is best for us. He came to be our Chief Shepherds in this life.

4. But His efforts don't end once we are in the flock, but they continue and if we were to ever wonder off then He will give effort to find them and bring them back. **(Luke 15:4-6)** He seeks after the lost sheep, to bring them into the fold for the first time and for the 100th time.

## **II. As the Chief Shepherd, Jesus provides for His sheep.**

- A. The purpose of having a shepherd is to have sheep cared for.
  1. Why does someone go through all of the effort of seeking out sheep and paying the cost to obtain them and keep them? Well the person would do that because he cares for them. Even if it is simply a monetary investment, there is still care involved because he doesn't want to see his investment go to waste.
  2. So then the shepherd will feed his sheep. He will provide drink for his sheep. He will offer shelter for his sheep. He will shear the sheep when the need arises. The shepherd is aware of the needs of the sheep and he seeks to provide for those needs because for the most part domesticated sheep are pretty helpless.
- B. As His sheep, Jesus provides for our every need.
  1. David makes this his opening statement of this Psalm, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want." Is he saying that he actually never needs anything? No, no he has needs, but his needs are constantly provided for by his loving Shepherd. It is as if he has no need.
  2. He is able to live a life of joy because his Shepherd cares so much for him and provides for his every need. The same is so true for us as the flock of God. Jesus, as our Chief Shepherd, provides for our every need. We figuratively lie down in green pastures and we go beside the still waters. Our lives for the most part are free of much of the turmoil and trouble that is experienced by those lost sheep in the world who are not cared for as we are.
  3. Our souls live in a peace that is only afforded to us because we know that we have a mighty Shepherd who cares for us and provides for us, even to the extend of giving His life for us, the sheep **(John 10:11)**. We can live with this type of peace within us because our Shepherd guides us through paths in this life that are filled with righteousness. We don't have to worry if the path Jesus is leading us down is full of difficulty because of consequences of sin because that's just not the path that Jesus will lead us down. Through His Word, through the Apostles that He provided for us that brought us what we have right here **(John 21:15-17)**, we know the road that we can go down in this life that leads to a restored soul. Our Shepherd provides!

## **III. As the Chief Shepherd, Jesus protects His sheep.**

- A. As David illustrates for us, a key role of the shepherd is to protect his sheep from dangers.
  1. As already mentioned, domesticated sheep are pretty helpless. They are not the strongest or fastest animals, so if they are attacked by a wild beast of some sort then they don't have much ability to defend themselves.
  2. Going back to David's time as a shepherd, he tells Saul of what he had to do in order to protect his sheep. David recognized the vulnerable nature of the animals in his care, and he knew that it was his responsibility to protect them from the dangers they would face. **(I Samuel 17:34,35)**
- B. Jesus provides protection in this life and promises glory in the next.
  1. We must not be so arrogant as to think that we are invulnerable from real dangers in this life. Even as one of the most powerful men in the world, David recognized the care and protection that his Lord provided to him. "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death." Even though we might be surrounded on all sides by danger "I fear no evil, for You are with me."
  2. We can find great comfort in knowing that Jesus is aware of the dangers that surround us. He knows of the temptations we will face and He provides a way of escape. **(I Cor. 10:13)** He is aware of the spiritual battles that we will face in this life and provides for us the armor necessary to battle. **(Eph. 6:10-17)** He knows that Satan is prowling around for easy prey to devour, and He warns us to stay sober in our mindset. **(I Peter 5:8)**
  3. Even though we are daily surrounded by enemies, Jesus our loving Shepherd protects His sheep. He provides indirectly through the local shepherd's of His churches. **(Acts 20:28-30)** We are His chosen people **(Eph. 1:4)** and He abundantly blesses us to the extent that we could never begin to quantify what He does for us. Surely His goodness and lovingkindness washes over us every single day, and as His sheep they will continue through this life and even into the next. Surely as sheep of the Great Shepherd we will dwell in the house of the Lord, forever.

Normally, to be called a sheep is taken as an insult. Today, we use it as a term to demean a person or people for following something or someone without thinking it through or taking their word without considering reality. However, to be called a sheep in the fold of Christ is anything but an insult. Instead, it is the greatest blessings that can be had in this life. To have it said that Jesus has sought us out. To have it said that Jesus has provided for us. To have it said that Jesus daily protects us is above and beyond anything that anyone else does for us in this life. I will proudly declare that I am a sheep that follows the Chief Shepherd Jesus Christ. I know that He will provide for my every need. I know that even if we have to walk through dangerous places that He will care for me. I know that His love will be shown to me each day and there is no place I would rather be. May God bless us as being part of the flock of His Son. May we appreciate the position we occupy, and may we serve Him continually in this life and into eternity in His house.