

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul. (Psalm 23:1-3a)

Shepherding God, you are the source of all comfort and life. We thank you for never leaving us and always guiding us in your right paths. Your mercy is too wonderful for us who tend to wander away and get lost or run into danger. Remind us always of the joy you grant in your holy presence and the comfort you give us each day. In Jesus' holy name we pray. Amen.

Introduction

In Psalm 23, King David wrote a song in which he remembered what it was like when he was a boy taking care of sheep. David said that human beings are like sheep, and that God is the shepherd who takes care of us and watches over us.

Read: Psalm 23

On reading these verses, what are some of your initial impressions and questions? What stands out to you?

The Biblical Context

Throughout the Old Testament you can find instances of poetry, proverbs, and songs. But there are some books in the Bible written entirely in this style. In addition to the Law and the Prophets, the Jewish people referred to this third category in the Bible as “the Writings.”

The Bible is honest in reflecting the real-life experience of faith in our lives — both good times and bad. The people of Scripture were not so different from us; they experienced joy as well as pain, happiness as well as hardship.

In the Psalms we find the thoughts and prayers of God's people who were facing situations common to us all. God gives us these words to read and speak to express our own faith in the many different circumstances in which we may find ourselves.

Discussion Questions

1. In Psalm 23, the Lord God is compared to a shepherd. If that is the case, who are the sheep? What does a shepherd do for the sheep?
2. Shepherds lead their sheep to good pastureland, even if they have to travel a distance to get there. In our lives of faith, how does God lead us “in paths of righteousness for his name's sake”? What means does he use?
3. For what reason does the psalmist “fear no evil,” even when he walks through the “valley of the shadow of death” (or “the darkest valley”)?
4. What are a rod and staff? What are they used for? How can those two things be comforting to the sheep?
5. In what sense would you say that the Lord “prepares a table before me in the presence of my enemies”? What does that mean?
6. Read what Jesus said in John 10:11-18 and 27-30. As our Good Shepherd, how does Jesus say he is unlike the hired hand? What is he willing to do for his sheep?
7. Shepherds spend much of their time bringing and keeping the sheep together. Why? How is this like how God brings believers together as the Church?
8. As disciples of Jesus, what is the basis of our relationship with him? What sure and certain promises does he make to us?
9. In what practical ways in your life does Jesus continually remind you of his promises?