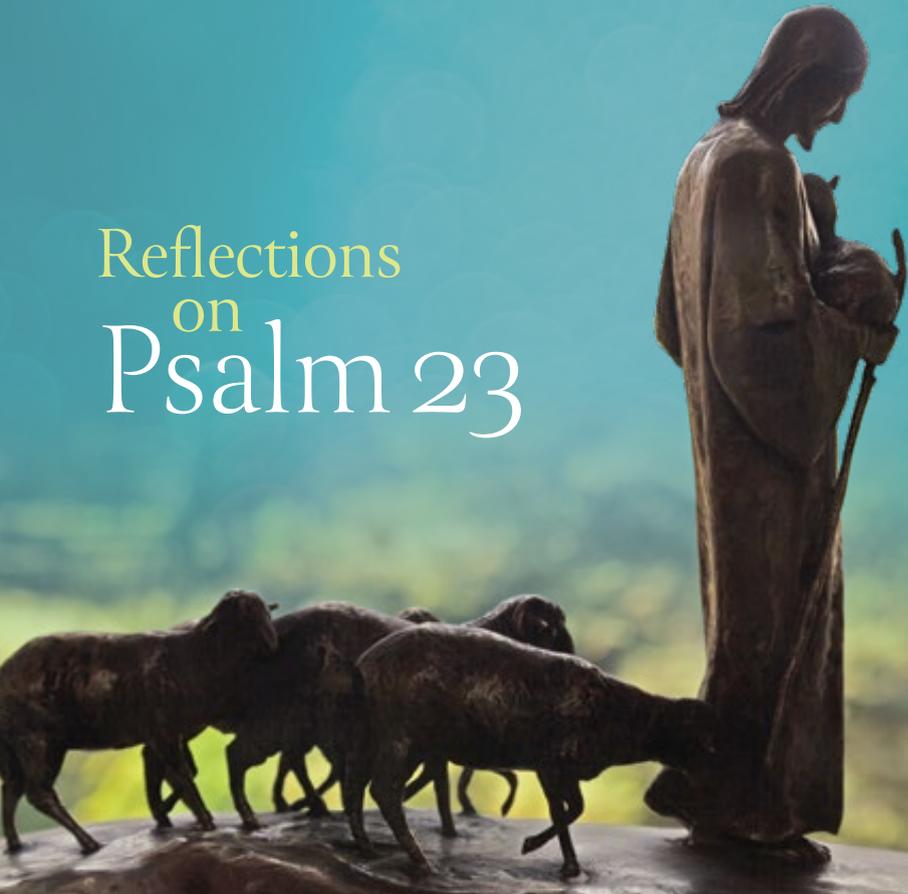


CAROL GEISLER

THE LORD
IS MY
SHEPHERD

Reflections
on
Psalm 23



Psalm 23

*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.
He leads me in paths
of righteousness
for his name's sake.
Even 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.
You prepare a table
before me
in the presence
of my enemies;
you anoint my head
with oil;
my cup overflows.
Surely goodness and
mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the
house of the LORD
forever.*

INTRODUCTION

My Shepherd

SHEPHERDS AND FLOCKS OF SHEEP ARE A FAMILIAR SIGHT IN MANY PARTS OF THE WORLD TODAY. YET FOR MANY OF US, ENCOUNTERS WITH SHEEP ARE VERY RARE, WITH THE POSSIBLE EXCEPTION OF A CHILD'S STUFFED TOY OR THE ANIMALS IN A NATIVITY SCENE UNDER THE CHRISTMAS TREE. ALTHOUGH WE MAY KNOW LITTLE ABOUT SHEEP, WE DO KNOW ABOUT CARING FOR OTHERS AND NEEDING CARE OURSELVES. AS PARENTS, CHILDREN, PASTORS, TEACHERS, HEALTH CARE WORKERS, FIRST RESPONDERS AND IN OUR MANY OTHER CALLINGS IN LIFE, WE GIVE AND RECEIVE CARE. WE ALSO KNOW WHAT IT IS TO FEEL LOST OR FRIGHTENED OR ALONE, AND THROUGH THE INSPIRED WORDS OF THE TWENTY-THIRD PSALM, WE KNOW IT MEANS TO EXPERIENCE THE TENDER CARE OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD.

I Am

The LORD is my shepherd.

PSALM 23:1

A SHEPHERD HIMSELF, THE PSALMIST DAVID KNOWS ALL ABOUT THE NEEDS OF SHEEP AND THE DUTIES OF A SHEPHERD. YET THE SHEPHERD DAVID IS ALSO A SHEEP, AND CONFIDENTLY CONFESSES THAT HIS SHEPHERD IS THE LORD, THE GOD OF ISRAEL AND THE CREATOR, WHOSE NAME IS I AM.

I AM, THE GOD WHO SET ISRAEL FREE FROM SLAVERY IN EGYPT, CAME TO LIVE AMONG US. HE CAME TO “TEND HIS FLOCK LIKE A SHEPHERD” AND “GATHER THE LAMBS IN HIS ARMS” (ISAIAH 40:11), AND HIS NAME IS JESUS. GOD IN HUMAN FLESH, JESUS SAID OF HIMSELF, “I AM THE GOOD SHEPHERD. THE GOOD SHEPHERD LAYS DOWN HIS LIFE FOR HIS SHEEP” (JOHN 10:11). THERE WERE LIKELY NO GREEN PASTURES AT A PLACE CALLED GOLGOTHA, WHERE THE GOOD SHEPHERD LAID DOWN HIS LIFE. JESUS WAS NAILED TO A CROSS, WHERE HE SUFFERED AND DIED TO SAVE HIS SHEEP, SHEDDING HIS BLOOD TO SET US FREE FROM OUR SLAVERY TO SIN AND RISING FROM DEATH TO GIVE US ETERNAL LIFE. THE LORD, I AM, THE GOD WHO SAVES AND SETS PEOPLE FREE, WAS DAVID’S SHEPHERD. HE IS OUR SHEPHERD, TOO.



**Lord and Shepherd, you have saved
me and set me free. Keep me safe
in your loving care. Amen.**

Satisfied

I shall not want.

PSALM 23:1

"I HAVE EVERYTHING I NEED." THAT MAY BE TRUE, BUT WE MAY NOT OFTEN THINK IN THOSE TERMS. OUR OWN SELFISH DESIRES AND OUR CONSUMER-DRIVEN CULTURE TEMPT US TO WANT MORE AND MORE THINGS, MORE, PERHAPS, THAN WE TRULY NEED.

GOD'S WORD CALLS FOR A DIFFERENT VIEW OF LIFE. "GODLINESS WITH CONTENTMENT IS GREAT GAIN ... IF WE HAVE FOOD AND CLOTHING, WITH THESE WE WILL BE CONTENT" (1 TIMOTHY 6:6-8). OUR SHEPHERD TELLS US NOT TO BE ANXIOUS ABOUT CLOTHING, FOOD AND DRINK. HE DIRECTS OUR ATTENTION TO THE GRASS, LILIES AND BIRDS OF THE GREEN PASTURES IN WHICH HIS SHEEP LIVE. GOD CLOTHES THE LILIES IN BEAUTY AND PROVIDES FOOD FOR THE BIRDS. IF GOD SO CAREFULLY TENDS THESE THINGS HE HAS CREATED, HE WILL CERTAINLY CARE FOR US (MATTHEW 6:26-39). IN JESUS OUR LORD, WE HAVE ALL WE NEED, AND EVEN MORE: "HE WHO DID NOT SPARE HIS OWN SON BUT GAVE HIM UP FOR US ALL, HOW WILL HE NOT ALSO WITH HIM GRACIOUSLY GIVE US ALL THINGS?" (ROMANS 8:32).



**Lord Jesus, in your gift of salvation I have
all that I need. Teach me, Good Shepherd,
to be content in your care. Amen.**

The Door

He makes me lie down in green pastures.

PSALM 23:2

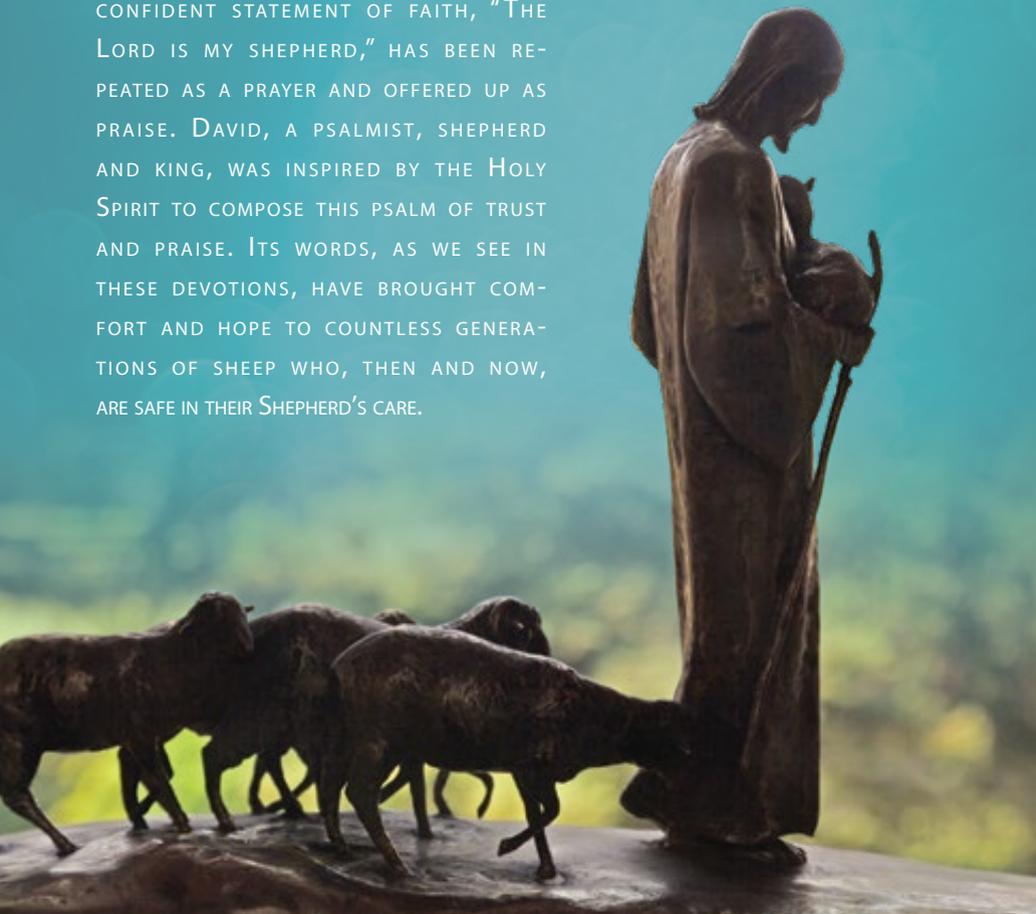
THE GRASS IS ALWAYS GREENER ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE FENCE, OR SO THE SAYING GOES. SOME SHEEP MAY BELIEVE THIS, WHICH MIGHT EXPLAIN THEIR TENDENCY TO WANDER. WE OFTEN LOOK AT OUR OWN CIRCUMSTANCES IN THE SAME WAY. LIFE MUST HAVE BEEN BETTER IN “THE GOOD OLD DAYS,” OR IT MIGHT BE MORE ENJOYABLE IF WE WERE SURROUNDED BY OTHER PEOPLE OR MORE THINGS. IN PURSUIT OF WHAT WE IMAGINE TO BE GREENER PASTURES, WE MAY BE TEMPTED TO WANDER FROM THE SHEPHERD.

OUR SHEPHERD MAKES US LIE DOWN IN GREEN PASTURES, AS THOUGH TO SAY, “REST HERE. BE CONTENT. YOU ARE MINE AND I WILL TAKE CARE OF YOU.” HE ALSO TELLS US, “I AM THE DOOR. IF ANYONE ENTERS BY ME, HE WILL BE SAVED AND WILL GO IN AND OUT AND FIND PASTURE” (JOHN 10:9). JESUS IS THE DOOR, THE ONLY WAY INTO THE PEACE AND SAFETY OF HIS SHEEPFOLD, HIS KINGDOM. THROUGH FAITH IN HIS NAME WE HAVE FORGIVENESS, PEACE AND THE GIFT OF ETERNAL LIFE. THOSE GREEN PASTURES ARE VERY REAL AND THEY LIE JUST INSIDE THE ONLY TRUE DOOR.



**Lord and Shepherd, thank you
for bringing us safely into the green
pastures of your kingdom. Amen.**

THE FAMILIAR WORDS OF PSALM 23 HAVE BEEN SPOKEN, WHISPERED AND SUNG IN CHURCHES AND HOMES, ON BATTLEFIELDS AND IN HOSPITAL ROOMS. THE CONFIDENT STATEMENT OF FAITH, "THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD," HAS BEEN REPEATED AS A PRAYER AND OFFERED UP AS PRAISE. DAVID, A PSALMIST, SHEPHERD AND KING, WAS INSPIRED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT TO COMPOSE THIS PSALM OF TRUST AND PRAISE. ITS WORDS, AS WE SEE IN THESE DEVOTIONS, HAVE BROUGHT COMFORT AND HOPE TO COUNTLESS GENERATIONS OF SHEEP WHO, THEN AND NOW, ARE SAFE IN THEIR SHEPHERD'S CARE.



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