

“The Lord Is My Shepherd”

By: Michael R. Hughes

Text: The Twenty-third Psalm

Theme: To point us to Christ.

Introduction:

Open the service with the singing of one of the songs based on Psalm 23: (nos. 236, 232 or 219).

1. The twenty-third Psalm is probably the most well-known, most often-quoted, most loved of all the Psalms. It has enjoyed the admiration of the world for hundreds of years. All peoples of all walks of life have grown to love and cherish the *Shepherd's Psalm*. Those in rags and those in riches alike have mutually fed themselves with the spiritual nourishment of this great song of David, the Sweet Singer of Israel.

This beloved melody has found its way into the writings of all great writers throughout the centuries. It has been often found in the documents of great nations. Its words have been set to music time and again that its hymnic strains might not be forgotten.

Its thoughts and beauty have been meditated upon and been a source of comfort and strength to troubled souls by the scores of thousands and millions throughout the passing generations. Many a person in times of distress has sat down to read the tender and soothing words of this charitable Psalm and has gone away being spiritually revived by its great message.

Whose heart would not be touched that would envision a young child in purity and innocence memorizing this

Sacred Text and then in the high pitched voice of this little one, with the eyes cast toward the great and almighty throne of Jehovah, in a look of dependency and a feeling of submissiveness, reciting....

[Quote the 23rd Psalm]

It is enough to cause the eyes to forfeit tears of joy realizing that such a young heart has been given over to love and service for the God of heaven.

Its words have been a source of inspiration to great numbers of artists who have in some way tried to capture on the canvass the beauty of the manuscript.

Its words have so captured the hearts and minds of mankind that if all the Bibles of the world were destroyed, the Twenty-third Psalm would yet live on. It is indelibly a part of the human race.

2. But how can one section of scripture become so exalted, so revered, so cherished and loved more than other portions of the Bible?
 - a. Because it answers a basic, yet highly important question for man:
 - 1) What is the relationship of man to God?
 - 2) Is this relationship one of indifference?
 - b. God cares, is the answer given.
 - c. The Psalm portrays God as a Shepherd.
 - 1) Who provides.
 - 2) Who guides.
 - 3) Who is a host that prepares a great abundance for His guests.
 - 4) In whose house we can live forever.
3. Consider the author of the Psalm - David.
 - a. Impossible to fix a definite date for the Psalm.
 - b. Probably later in life - see verse 4.
 - 1) Victories over Saul.
 - 2) Victories over Absalom.
 - c. By now probably:
 - 1) He has sinned with Bathsheba.
 - 2) He has had Uriah killed.
 - 3) God's curses have come upon him.
 - a) Lost his wives.

- b) Evil raised up against him out of his own house.
- c) The death of the child he had with Bathsheba.
- d. A broken man, yet he sees that God has had great purpose in all this - see v. 3.
 - 1) The restoration of the soul.
 - 2) To make him righteous.
- e. Compare with Job -
 - 1) He was a man of great despair in life.
 - a) Lost his family, health, wealth.
 - b) Job 13:15.
 - 2) In David's despair, he cries to the Lord, "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want."

Discussion:

- I. Seemingly in this Psalm, David pictures himself as being away from home.
 - A. Home, that is, the house of God.
 - B. He is longing for it.
 - 1. But he knows at all times that Jehovah is his shepherd.
 - 2. This makes him happy, filled and complete.
- II. David, as he journeys for the house of the Lord where he will dwell for ever, teaches us many great lessons.
 - A. Faith - "The Lord is my shepherd" - Hebrews 11:6.
 - 1. Sheep place great faith in the shepherd.
 - 2. He will obey the shepherd knowing the concern of the shepherd for him.

Sing *My Faith Looks Up To Thee*, stanzas 1 & 3
(no. 36).

- B. Assurance - "I shall not want" -
 - 1. The sheep do not worry about food, shelter.
 - 2. Matthew 6:31-34.
 - 3. Our salvation is assured - I John 5:13.

Sing *Blessed Assurance*, all stanzas (no. 4).

- C. Contentment - "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures" -

1. A scene of contentment.
2. Philippians 4:11.
- D. With God, there is peace - "He leadeth me beside the still waters" -
 1. It is very soothing to view a motionless body of water.
 2. Jesus, the prince of peace - That peace that passes all understanding.
- E. He is the God of life - "He restoreth my soul" -
 1. God would not have any to perish - John 3:17; II Peter 3:9.
 2. He is ready to forgive those that seek forgiveness.
- F. God is the great leader - "He leadeth me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake" -
 1. The Bible - the pathway to heaven - Psalm 119:105.
 2. I Corinthians 1:1.

Sing *He Leadeth Me*, all stanzas (no. 63).

- G. Confidence - "Yea, though...death" -
 1. Death - a terrifying thought.
 2. God has given us a means of confidence - I Corinthians 5:57.
- H. Courage - "I will fear no evil" -
 1. Only a righteous man can fear no evil.
 2. Proverbs 28:1.
 3. Matthew 10:28.

Sing *To Christ Be True*, all stanzas (no. 516).

- I. Companionship - "For Thou art with me" -
 1. God and one make a majority.
 2. Elijah and the 450 prophets of Baal.
 3. Hebrews 13:5.
 4. Matthew 28:20.
- J. Comfort - "Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me" -
 1. A shepherd comforts his sheep.
 2. I Thessalonians 4:18.
 - a. Paul's discourse on death.

- b. Spoken by revelation of Christ (Great Shepherd of sheep).
- K. Providence - "Thou preparest a tableenemies" -
 1. God helped David overcome his enemies.
 2. He will, by providence, help us to overcome our enemies.
 - a. Satan.
 - b. Sin.
 - c. Self.

Sing *Be Not Dismayed*, stanzas 1 & 4 (no. 56).

- L. Favor - "Thou anointest my head with oil" -
 1. The Lord smiles with favor upon the righteous.
- M. Psalm 16:6. M. Joy - "My cup runneth over" -
 1. A great joy being a Christian -
 2. "We should so fill ourselves with the gospel that when someone punches us the gospel will run out." - Gus Nichols

Sing *Sing On*, stanzas 1 & 3 (no. 486).

- N. Blessings to follow - "Surely goodness.....my life" -
 1. We can trust in the Lord's promises - II Peter 3:9.
 2. John 10:10.
- O. Immortality - "And I will forever" -
 1. The triumph of life over the grave.
 2. The triumph of Christianity over the world.
 - a. I Corinthians 15:52-55.
 - b. John 14:1-3.

Sing *Mansion Over The Hilltop*, all stanzas (no. 616).

- III. Actor/preacher illustration -
 - A famous actor and a preacher were on a cruise together.
 - The people asked the actor to quote the 23rd Psalm.
 - He did and the people gave a tremendous ovation.
- Then they asked the preacher to quote the Psalm as well.
- As he did, his eyes filled with tears as the words came

across his lips. The people stood silent and motionless.

The actor spoke up and said, "I know the *Shepherd's Psalm*, this man knows the Shepherd."

Conclusion:

1. Do you know the shepherd?
2. John 10:11

Invitation:

Sing *Hark, The Gentle Voice*, all stanzas (no. 71).
Better to sing *Jesus, The Loving Shepherd* when using a book that has that song.

Bibliography:

The song references for this lesson are from the book *Church Gospel Songs And Hymns*, edited by V.E. Howard and Broadus E. Smith, 10th printing, copyright 1983.