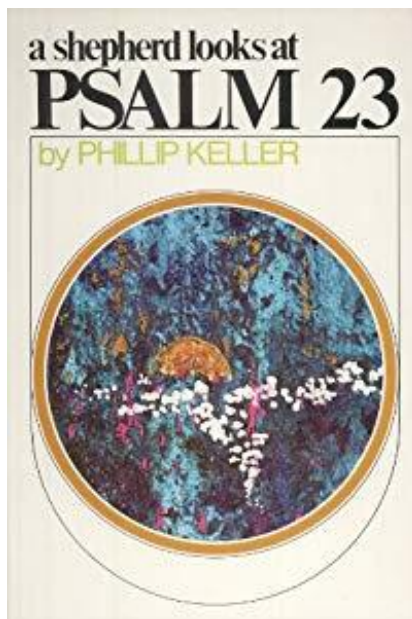


Sunday Morning - MARCH 8, 2020



13 THE FAITHFUL PROVISION OF THE LORD PART 2

*23 The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.*

*<sup>2</sup> He makes me to lie down in green pastures;  
He leads me beside the still waters.*

*<sup>3</sup> He restores my soul;  
He leads me in the paths of righteousness  
For His name's sake.*

*<sup>4</sup> Yea, 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.*

*<sup>5</sup> You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;  
You anoint my head with oil; My cup runs over. <sup>6</sup> Surely*

*goodness and mercy shall follow me All the days of my life; And I will dwell in the house of the LORD Forever. (NKJV).*

On Wednesday night, we took a look at a sort of triplet found in verses 2 and 3 of Psalm 23. They were:

1. He makes me to lie down in green pastures.
2. He leads me beside still waters.
3. He restores my soul.

These are metaphors of several important ways that the Lord provides for us. We learned on Wednesday night that in order to lie down in green pastures a sheep needs to be: (1) free from fear, (2) free from friction, (3) free from pests and parasites, and (4) free from hunger. A sheep must have these freedoms to be able to lie down in peace. The same holds true for humans. God wants to tend to us as sheep, keeping us free from all fear, free from friction with others, free from the debilitating worries of all those things that "bug" us, and free from spiritual and emotional hunger. God does not want us to live in fear. He does not want us to be wrapped up in tension and conflict. He does not want the details of life to bug us to death, and He does not want us to starve spiritually, emotionally, or financially.

## **FREEDOM FROM FEAR**

**Firstly**, we looked at scripture, and we learned that there is no room for fear in the heart of a believer. *For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power, and of love and of a sound mind. (2 Timothy 1:7, NKJV)*. Our human default to the trials of life is fear. Uncertainty can bring fear into our hearts. We learned that as Christians, we were never promised a life without trials. Rather, we were taught that trials would come and that God would be there with us through the trials. It is in the trials that we develop spiritual muscles. Often great spiritual lessons come to us in the midst of trials. James, the brother of Jesus, warned the believer of trials to come when he said:

*<sup>2</sup> My friends, consider yourselves fortunate when all kinds of trials come your way, <sup>3</sup> for you know that when your faith succeeds in facing such trials, the result is the ability to endure. <sup>4</sup> Make sure that your endurance carries you all the way without failing, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing. (James 1:2-4, GNT).*

We have a Good Shepherd that drives away our every fear and concern if we will let Him do so. If you don't submit to the Shepherd who is capable of directing your life, you will be filled with fear of abandonment, fear of being alone, fear of doing without, fear of health problems, fear of relationship problems, and FEAR OF THE KNOWN AND UNKNOWN. You will be PARALYZED IN FEAR. We saw a photo on Wednesday night of motivational speaker Nick Vujicik saying that fear is the worst disability that a person can have. WE have a Father in heaven who knows our every need. He knows our every fear, and He has made provision for taking care of those things that we are afraid of.

## **FREEDOM FROM FRICTION**

**Secondly**, we learned that believers must be free of friction (tension) in order to be able to "lie down in green pastures." We can't settle down until we're settled down. We talked about the competitions that go on between humans, and even in the church. Friction is often caused when a person wants to exert themselves over another. Some reading this sermon and some in this congregation have never been able to have success in horizontal relationships because you've not given them to the Lord. There are guiding principles that direct us in living without friction in our marriages, our relationships, our friendships, and our working relationships.

Some of you have trouble in the workplace because you've not taken truth from God's Word and applied it to your life. You show up for work and don't do what you're hired to do; yet you expect to get paid. Paul the Apostle says, "<sup>10</sup> For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat. <sup>11</sup> For we hear that there are some who walk among you in a disorderly manner, not working at all, but are busybodies. <sup>12</sup> Now those who are such we command and exhort through our Lord Jesus Christ that they work in quietness and eat their own bread. (2 Thessalonians 3:10-12, NKJV). I used to tell my kids, "If you want success in your job, just show up, act normal, and do what you're hired to do. Don't make waves or get 'into it' with others." That's 80% of it.

Paul also says, *“Work hard, but not just to please your masters when they are watching. As slaves of Christ, do the will of God with all your heart. Work with enthusiasm, as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people.” (Ephesians 6:6, NLT).* I am bringing this up because work-place friction is one of the greatest areas of discontent for believers. We all need to work because we all need to eat. God gives us instructions concerning this.

Sometimes we even have trouble getting along with others in the church. I think this is one reason that God calls us to attend a fellowship other than sitting in front of a TV watching a sermon that is televised. Often in a church, people will try to be the "top dog." They wrestle with others and compete on some level. I commented on Wednesday that if we keep our eyes on Jesus instead of each other, those kinds of competitions will fade and go away. We the church need to be *“tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.” (Ephesians 4:32, NKJV).*

**Thirdly**, we must be free of "pests and parasites" in order to lie down in green pastures. We talked about how these pests to us are the **details of life**. We are "bugged" by people and we are "bugged" by all kinds of problems. The gracious Holy Spirit of God brings healing comfort and relief when we call on Him. He brings serenity, quietness, and relief to the disagreeable circumstances that are beyond our control.

The Holy Spirit applies the antidote to our frustrations in the same way that a shepherd applies ointment to the head of the sheep to help it deal with the pests and parasites that forever are trying to invade and infest it. He sweetly comes and brings relief in ways we never even imagined. He applies His presence and peace to our problems. The assurance that He is active on our behalf allows us to lie down in peace.

**Fourthly**, we must be free from hunger to be able to "lie down in green pastures." When a sheep is hungry, it is on the move. It restless and trying to find any and all scraps of forage that it can. It will ONLY survive if the shepherd is making provision for it. We as believers have the wonderful provision of God's Word. The Bible has been described as "Basic Instructions Before Leaving Earth," and yet most Christians don't go to it first in the morning. They go to the project that is foremost in their mind, or they jump onto Facebook to find out what the world is talking about. If you want to be able to "lie down in green pastures" during your day, eat richly from God's Word in the early morning hours. Just a few short minutes in the Word will give you what you need to get through your day!

The Psalm then states: "He leads me beside the still waters." Wow! That is really saying something. I see several rich truths in that statement. First, **HE LEADS ME!** Imagine for a moment that you have a Shepherd of your own that **leads you** to the water every day of your life. Not only that, but He leads you to *still* waters. They are tranquil and wonderful. They are not chaotic and stirred up. We are not meant to live a life of chaos and confusion. Did you know that shepherds go to great lengths to make sure that their sheep have good water? There are, of course, ponds, lakes, creeks, and rivers to which a shepherd leads his sheep. But

to me, the most interesting fact is that during the cooler months, sheep do **not** get most of their water from those obvious places.

During much of fall, spring, and the cool winter months, the sheep get just about ALL of the water they need from the dew on the grass. In the early hours of the day, beginning right before dawn, the shepherd takes his sheep out onto the fields of grass that are saturated with the dew from heaven. One of the agricultural science departments of Michigan State University published a field handbook that is available on the internet. It says that during many months of the year, a sheep **can get nearly ALL of the water it needs off of the grass alone.**<sup>1</sup> Do you see a great metaphor here?

Believers drink from pools, streams, and rivers every Sunday or Wednesday when they attend services and hear a pastor preach from the Word of God, but the day to day needs of the sheep are met in feasting on the dew of the grass of the early morning in the presence of your Good Shepherd. Getting into the Word of God each morning is what will take you through the "heat of the day." It is after the morning passes that the trials and troubles of life will come at you. Those trials are like the hot sun that rises in the sky and tests you through the heat of the day. You will only be able to make it through those trials if your spirit has soaked up fresh water. Don't get hung up on how long you have to drink. JUST DRINK of God's word each morning. Read SOMETHING from God's Word! David talks about how he seeks God early in the morning,

*O God, You are my God;*

***Early will I seek You;***

*My soul thirsts for You;*

*My flesh longs for You*

*In a dry and thirsty land*

*Where there is no water.*

<sup>2</sup> *So I have looked for You in the sanctuary,*

*To see Your power and Your glory.*

<sup>3</sup> *Because Your lovingkindness is better than life,*

*My lips shall praise You.*

<sup>4</sup> *Thus I will bless You while I live;*

*I will lift up my hands in Your name.*

<sup>5</sup> *My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness,*

*And my mouth shall praise You with joyful lips. (Psalm 63:1-5, NKJV).*

David understood the power to be found in God's Word. David understood the power of prayer AND the power of praise. He understood that God's Word was sweeter than honey in the *honeycomb*.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.canr.msu.edu/news/do\\_sheep\\_always\\_need\\_access\\_to\\_a\\_fluid\\_water\\_source](https://www.canr.msu.edu/news/do_sheep_always_need_access_to_a_fluid_water_source)

<sup>7</sup> *The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul;  
The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple;*  
<sup>8</sup> *The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart;  
The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes;*  
<sup>9</sup> *The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever;  
The judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether.*  
<sup>10</sup> *More to be desired are they than gold,  
Yea, than much fine gold;  
Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. (Psalm 19:7-10, KNJV).*

This week, I want to encourage you to let Him lead you beside still waters. In order to drink from still waters you must allow Him to lead you there. Scripture is full of encouragement to do that BEFORE your day gets out of control. David reminds us, *"I rise before dawn and cry for help; I wait for Your words."* (Psalm 119:147, NASB).

The text states that "He restoreth my soul." **How exactly does He restore your soul?** Think about it in terms of the needs we have just studied. When you are afraid, **He takes away fear.** Scripture tells us that God is love, and that *"perfect love casts out fear"* (1 John 4:18). When you are under tension or in conflict with others, **He can take care of your tension and strife.** The Apostle Paul admonishes us: *"<sup>17</sup> If someone has done you wrong, do not repay him with a wrong. Try to do what everyone considers to be good. <sup>18</sup> Do everything possible on your part to live in peace with everybody. <sup>19</sup> Never take revenge, my friends, but instead let God's anger do it. For the scripture says, "I will take revenge, I will pay back, says the Lord." (Romans 12:17-19, GNT).* **He gets rid of the bugs and pests** in our life through the soothing comfort of the Holy Spirit. Lastly, He provides a sumptuous feast in His Word each morning giving us spiritual nourishment and refreshing water that will take us through the difficulties of the day.

Yes, we have a Good Shepherd. He takes care of His sheep. Will you decide today to become and obedient sheep?

Let us pray.

Union Grove is one of the oldest Baptist communities of faith in the State of Texas dating back to 1844. Pastor Faber McMullen may be reached by email at uniongrove362@gmail.com or by snail mail at: 15301 FM 362, Navasota, Texas 77868. Tel: 936-825-1227 (Edited and proofed by Amanda Neese- Webster, Texas.) All financial gifts to this ministry are tax-deductible as a 501 (c) (3) Corporation.