

Daily Devotional, May 9, 2020 We Are His Sheep

Over the past week we have looked more closely at Psalm 23 and in it we have discovered the three main affirmations of the psalm: the first thing David affirms, the middle point, and the final affirmation he makes. "The Lord is my Shepherd, You are with me, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever." What meant most to David was the intimate relationship he had with God: with the God of the burning bush, the God of the Exodus, and the God who gave them their Promised Land. It is out of that affirmation of the personal presence of God, that David is able to say, "I shall not want, I will fear no evil, and I will dwell in house of the Lord forever." These are strong statements of faith that come from a deep-seeded commitment to trusting in God and God's Word.

Roughly a thousand years after King David lived and died, his Shepherd was born. The Shepherd's name was Jesus and when Jesus grew older and started His ministry, He used the same imagery as He was trying to help people understand who He was. In John 10:3, Jesus begins to speak of the Good Shepherd, and he says, the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice." Those who were listening to Jesus' teaching could not understand what He was getting at, so in verses 10 and 11 Jesus says, "I came that My sheep may have life and have it abundantly. *I am* the Good Shepherd, and the Good Shepherd lays down His life for His sheep."

A few years after Jesus said those words, He did lay down His life for His sheep, didn't He? He laid His life down on the cross where He paid the price for the sin that His sheep had committed. The news of the gospel is that someday our Good Shepherd is coming back for us. Someday either at our death, or when God the Father says, "Enough is enough" and He brings an end to time and our Shepherd comes back for us, then we will be able to say with David in Psalm 23, "And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever."

In Revelation 7, the last book of the Bible, we learn about the end times. John the Apostle who wrote this book uses some of the same imagery that he used in his gospel. First, he speaks of Jesus' sheep, those that were martyred for the sake of His name. Starting at verse 15 he states, "Therefore, they (the sheep) are before the throne of God and serve Him day and night in his temple and He who sits on the throne will shelter them with His presence. They will never again hunger, neither will they thirst, the sun will not beat down on them nor any scorching heat, for the Lamb (Jesus) at the center of the throne *will be their Shepherd*; He will guide them to springs of living water and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes." He who sits on the throne will shelter them with His presence. That's a pretty awesome picture, isn't it?

The promises of presence and provision and protection are for His sheep, and Jesus' sheep know they need a Shepherd. Jesus' sheep believe that their Shepherd laid down His life for them. We believe that Jesus' death on the cross paid the penalty for our sins. And Jesus' sheep hear His voice and follow Him. They commit their lives to Him. If you are one of His sheep, it is a challenge for you to live out your faith, to understand at the very core of who we are as Christians, that we are people with whom God's presence dwells and it is out of that intimate and personal relationship with the God of the universe that our faith flows, our faith in His provision, and our faith in His protection. That is our daily challenge, to become His sheep and then to live as His sheep, and finally to call other sheep into the sheepfold.

Let us pray: Good Shepherd, we thank you for Your provision, Your physical provision, Your personal provision, all the things that You give us. Hear now the cries of Your sheep thanking You for Your provision. Good Shepherd, hear the cries of thanksgiving from Your sheep for the protection, spiritual and physical that You afford each one of us even in the valley of the shadow of death. Good Shepherd, hear the cries of Your sheep as we thank You for Your very presence in our hearts and in our lives. Jesus, You are our Shepherd and there is nothing in heaven or on earth that we desire more than You. Amen.