“The Shepherd and His Sheep: All Glory to Him”

**Psalm 23:1-3 (see also Mark 14:26-72 & John 21:1-22)**

(notes based on the sermon by Pastor Steve Massey, Hayden Bible Church, 11/21/21)

 Psalm 23 is the cadence of the Christian life to those who are His. It tells of security and blessing for His people. God’s people are being restored to Him and led into a life that brings glory to God. Christian, be thankful of your position in Christ, as well as your day-by-day restoration to Him. Who is your Good Shepherd? He is Yahweh, Creator and Sustainer of all things. Your Good Shepherd leads His people so that His name is glorified.

 Psalm 23 gives us a “sheep’s-eye-view” of the Good Shepherd. What kind of sheep needs to be restored? A “cast down” sheep, one unable to get up out of the soft earth and back on its feet again. A “cast down” sheep is unable to follow the shepherd. It is in trouble and easy prey for predators. In Scotland, a “cast down” sheep is called a coped sheep (we use that word when we say, “I just can’t cope anymore!”). What kind of sheep becomes a coped sheep? ALL SHEEP! (Isa. 53:6a) We are all predisposed to stray from God. Isa. 53:6b goes on to say that the Good Shepherd lays down His life to restore His coped sheep. If your conscience is telling you that you are cast down, or not even one of His sheep, please cry out to Him and accept His forgiveness and restoration today.

 Psalm 23 is a song of contentment: “I shall not want.” We are enlivened by the green pastures of His Word and the still waters of His Holy Spirit. Do Christians need to be restored? YES!!! As a child of God, it is normal to sometimes be cast down: Who among us has never been immobilized by fear, doubt, despondency, despair, or overwork? Being cast down can be a result of our own doing, or a result of Satan’s meddling. It can also be God’s providence! (Q1) Sometimes we don’t even know where this despondency comes from. There is spiritual warfare going on around us right now, folks. God’s people are relentlessly attacked by the enemy of our souls. Charles Spurgeon noted that even the redeemed can suffer depression.

 Often God’s people are cast down because of their own foolishness, pride, carelessness, or apathy. If you read the passage from Mark 14:26-72, you’ll see that Peter’s pride and smugness got in the way. Like some of us (me!!!), we sheep sometimes get our role confused with the Shepherd’s role. But let’s be clear: an irritated and irritating sheep has a hard time being led and fed by the shepherd! Toward the end of this passage, it said, “Peter followed, but at a distance.” Is that you? Has pragmatism replaced true following? Has comfort and security replaced true following?

 Realizing you are cast down is actually a blessing! Godly sorrow (not self-pity) leads to repentance. If we are coped, is God disgusted with us? NO! Read Matt. 18:11-13. What is the remedy? Cry out to the Shepherd! (see Ps. 51:10-11). How does God respond to a cry like this? HE RESTORES MY SOUL! (Ps. 23:3a).

 Why did Jesus ask Peter 3 times if he loved Him? It wasn’t as if Jesus didn’t already know the answer!! He asked because it was Peter that needed the reminder. It was as if Jesus was saying, “I want to put you back in the place of usefulness. I want to get you going in the right direction, down those “paths of righteousness” (Ps. 23:3b). Your trouble may not go away, but Jesus says that He will be with you as He leads you through it. You’re not following Jesus if you are not walking in righteousness. You’re not following Jesus unless you are governed by Him. The Good Shepherd’s leadership guides and enables His sheep to follow Him. Sometimes He even picks us up and carries us! God never tells His people to do something without giving them the power to do it. **Only the person who wants to follow Jesus will follow Jesus**. Is that the desire of your heart?

 To “live in the paths of righteousness” means behavior, not just ideas. It’s expressed in Ps. 1:1-3 as it describes the godly and the ungodly. Do you live for Christ, or does your behavior show you are rejecting Him or apathetic to Him? The Good Shepherd restores you so that the fruit of righteousness is born in your life in a tangible way. Both the Old Testament and the New Testament are full of instructions and reminders on how to follow God’s paths of righteousness. (Q2) Phillip Keller noted that “Obedience… is learned by practicing it.” (See also Heb. 5:14 & Phil. 4:9).

 Why does our Good Shepherd lead us in paths of righteousness? FOR HIS NAME’S SAKE. It’s all for His glory. The attitude and direction of my life either shames or vindicates my Shepherd’s good name (His nature and reputation). Do people see God’s attributes in you? Do you reflect the glory back on Him?

 Our Good Shepherd restores, leads, enables, and redeems His sheep for His glory, for His name’s sake. Our ways should progressively conform to His ways. God’s people are being restored to Him and led by Him into a life that brings Him glory. That is what it is to be one of His sheep. (Q3) (Q4)

**QUESTIONS:**

1. How can being “cast down” be a providence from God? How can it be a blessing in disguise?
2. As a small group, state some of these “instructions and reminders”. Here are 2 to get you started: Obey your mother and father; Go and make disciples… Your turn!
3. How, specifically, did Jesus pull Peter out of his despondency?
4. How does the Good Shepherd lead His sheep in paths of righteousness?

“Savior, like a Shepherd Lead Us” (Thrupp)

1 Savior, like a shepherd lead us,

Much we need Thy tender care;

In Thy pleasant pastures feed us,

For our use Thy folds prepare:

Blessèd Jesus, blessèd Jesus,

Thou hast bought us, Thine we are;

Blessèd Jesus, blessèd Jesus,

Thou hast bought us, Thine we are.