

The 23rd Psalm

I saw this take on the Psalm a while ago and while it struck me as unusual, I felt it had some meaning to it. I have been thinking about this for some time. I don't remember who wrote it – couldn't find it anywhere – but I give credit to whom ever it is!!

King David who wrote this – worked as a shepherd. He loved the metaphor of seeing God or the Lord as a shepherd. The shepherds job is to take care of his flock. Keeping them safe, calm, nourished and happy. One can extend this idea that God does this for us.

I have added some of my own thoughts to what were just a one or two word response. You can follow along on the front of the bulletin.

***The Lord is my Shepherd* – That's a relationship! It got me to thinking about my relationship with God. He is very important in my life and have been there for me when I needed him. He prods and guides me through worship and my reading the Bible. Think about yourself here.**

***I shall not want* – Supply and demand. And no – not just real estate. Our Lord gives us everything we need. Spiritual comfort – air to breath – love to feel – rules to live by! Do you ever stop and think about if you demand more from him?**

Have you ever prayed and expected the answer that YOU are looking for? Does He give you what you need?

He maketh me to lie down in green pastures – That’s rest!

Which got me to thinking – do I take the time to enjoy where I live? Do I take for granted the great resources we have here in our area? The Metro Parks – our city – our state – our country. We as a nation have many “green pastures” to enjoy! Do you take the time to rest and enjoy.

We’re all very busy – but at some point, we should slow down. And actually – the reason I am guest preaching here today is that Jon is sort of “lying down in green pastures himself” – a much needed rest for him. I feel that we are so blessed as a congregation by Jon’s gifts.

He leadeth me beside still waters – Refreshment – What comes to mind for me is - Do you think about how many times a day you turn on and turn off water because you are thirsty? Do you do that with your faith? Do you turn it on and off like you do water? Only when you need it? Water is a very precious resource that cannot be abused. We have to use it everyday! We live in a area that has an abundant source! Do you go down to our Great Lake Erie for your refreshment? If you are like me and my bride – we can’t wait to get to a beach and the water. It’s where WE calm down.

He restoreth my soul – That’s healing! Healing is a process – sometimes it takes time – sometimes you have to go thru other problems to realize God was moving you in the right

direction all along. I feel - that God is in my soul. It's part of me. I'm not perfect by any means – but I think about where he is in my life. I try and give that to others as well. I'm not ashamed of my faith. I'm proud of where I worship and like to tell others about this church and our church family.

He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness – Guidance! Boy do I need that! I have several people in my life that I seek guidance from as well as what God offers me. Now – I don't always use the advice I seek – but hey – that's a whole other sermon! However, I try to live to please God. I do ask myself, how I can help others do as well. I guess what I do, speaks more than what I say.

For His names sake – Purpose! Jesus had a purpose and fulfilled it through his ministry and his death. I often ask myself, what is my purpose – I joke a lot with people that I work with and know me well that my headstone will say – “ at least he made us laugh!” Cuz I know they're gonna miss me! But that's all in fun – it's not my real purpose. We are all on this journey to seek Gods purpose and will experience hard times, detours, disappointments and successes. However I do feel that at times - I need to make people smile and be happy. For me - taking time to give a sermon is fulfilling some of the purpose in my life.

Yea – though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death – WHAT kind of test is that!! We are tested everyday with things in our lives that can make or break us or a situation.

How do you handle those tests? There are times of trial in all our lives - how we overcome them and how we endure and handle them is paramount – is it through prayer, through church -through friends and family. I like to think that when I’m tested – I rely on what I know is right and wrong and base my decision – good or bad on what I know. Have I made mistakes – you betcha! However I know that I am forgiven.

***I will fear no evil* – Protection! If you have a solid relationship with your faith and believe that there is a higher power – then fear and anticipation over the unknown, just won’t exist! Believing in His word will give us the strength to know that there is life in His kingdom.**

***For thou are with me* – This is Faithfulness. I believe he is with me – do you? AND here it is! – Those of you who know me – know that I always put a song in somewhere in my sermons – Have you ever heard the song by Carrie Underwood – Jesus Take the Wheel? Its about a young woman driving with her baby in the car during bad weather – It’s stormy – icy and hard to see – she is carrying the weight of the world on her as she is driving – thinking about all the difficult times she is having and has had – what she is struggling to get done and how is she going to cope with how she feels – downtrodden, defeated and lonely. She lets go of the steering wheel as she cannot take anymore – and says – “Jesus Take the Wheel” – it’s a very powerful song!**

***Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me* – Discipline – Traditionally, shepherds carried a long staff with a hook on the end to ward off danger to their sheep and to prod and guide them in the right direction – sheep do have small brains. That's God's discipline for us. He protects and guides us here on Earth until we meet him in Heaven.**

***Thou prepares a table before me in the presence of mine enemies* – This is Hope. This is an interesting line of the Psalm – it implies that you are having a party or dinner with people who don't like you! Our Lord tells us not to act or behave as others would want us to – but to be ourselves. Whether someone likes what we do or say is not our business – does it hurt? Sometimes Yes – does it define us? It shouldn't. We need to live as the Bible asks us to. Not to worry about what others think – to be faithful and strong. The rest takes care of itself.**

***Thou annointest my head with oil* – This is consecration. Giving of myself to our Lord. Participating in the breaking of bread – being a part of this church – serving others through being an Elder – giving back to my church family and community. There is something Holy about going through that process.**

***My cup runneth over* – Abundance. I believe that sometimes you have to look for what to be grateful for – like an unanswered prayer – a job offer – a new friend – times you**

are overwhelmed with life and so grateful. My cup does runneth over! I have a wonderful bride, two wonderful adult sons, one married and a beautiful daughter in law. The other to be married, with a lovely young lady. They have great families and we share fun and fellowship with them. I have a great career – a fantastic church and church family. What more do I need? What more do you need? My cup does runneth over!

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life – What a blessing!! I wish that for you as well.

And I will dwell in the house of the Lord – Security! But not just on Sunday mornings! Weave your beliefs into your weekdays and Saturdays too. Then you will have a sense of being – being loved by God – family and friends.

Forever- For Eternity!! Gods love is limitless – Accept it, allow it in your life and share it with others. You are here to make the world a better place.

The power of this prayer may be due in part to the fact that millions of people have used it over the past three or four thousand years! However, it is also a very profound statement of the process that human beings often go through as they heal at deep levels.

If this prayer seems helpful for you, use it often and learn to appreciate that when you truly embrace the concept of God

as your shepherd and guide, you will be protected and help in ways you cannot imagine.

Amen!