

PSALM 23

If I asked anyone in our congregation what their favourite psalm is; the majority would probably say, “Pastor, I think it’s Psalm 23.” Everyone knows this psalm, and even non-Christians have heard it because it is a favourite at funerals. But it’s not a psalm of death, but of life, rest and peace. And for something 3000 years old, it is extremely relevant to our lives today! With this in mind I would like to go through each line and next to it provide a “one-word summary” that describes the blessings associated with the Great Shepherd.

<i>The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want</i>	- PROVISION
<i>He makes me to lie down in green pastures</i>	- REST
<i>He leads me beside the still waters</i>	- PEACE
<i>He restores my soul</i>	- RESORATION
<i>He leads me in the paths of righteousness</i>	- DIRECTION
<i>For His name’s sake</i>	- RELATIONSHIP
<i>Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death</i>	- PERSEVERANCE
<i>I will fear no evil</i>	- COURAGE
<i>For You are with me</i>	- COMPANIONSHIP
<i>Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me</i>	- SECURITY
<i>You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies</i>	- VICTORY
<i>You anoint my head with oil</i>	- AUTHORITY
<i>My cup runs over</i>	- ABUNDANCE
<i>Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me</i>	- COVENANT
<i>All the days of my life</i>	- CONTENTMENT
<i>And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever</i>	- FAMILY

Scan these words carefully and you will notice that the Great Shepherd satisfies every requirement for you to live a ‘blessed’ life. Therefore, whatever you are going through, you will find words that describe exactly what you need right now! And be rest assured, Jesus is ready and able to take care of that need. For example... If you have lack – “provision” and “abundance.” If you are stressed or exhausted – “rest,” “peace” and “contentment.” If you are lonely – “relationship,” “companionship” and “family.” If you are hurting – “restoration” and “security.” If you are in fear – “courage,” “victory” and “authority.” If you are struggling – “direction,” “perseverance” and “covenant.”

To end, I would like to explain a verse that is so often misunderstood (verse 4), “*Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death.*” In Biblical times, the shepherd would lead the sheep from oasis to oasis, and this sometimes meant passing through narrow valleys that had steep cliff faces on either side. These valleys were often dark because of the shadow caused by the cliffs, and they were a favourite place for predators to hide. Hence, this verse speaks to us of the trying times where there is darkness, confusion and fear. Notice however that the Psalmist clearly says he ‘walks through’ this valley. He doesn’t stop, and he doesn’t give up hope. It’s not somewhere to park or set up camp! He presses on knowing that if there are shadows, there must be light around the corner causing them! Too many Christians never receive what it says next, “I will fear no evil,” because they have not got this right. Camping in the valley will never get rid of your fears and anxieties. You must exercise perseverance and faith and keep going! It’s in the “walking through” that the Lord promises to meet you.

“No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him.”