

Psalm 23 - *Is My Shepherd*

Except for special areas, sheep are not found in any great number in our country. Therefore, shepherds, too, are not a common occupation. That makes it a bit more difficult for us to understand how a shepherd could be helpful to us.

But, we have many excellent examples given to us in the Scriptures. While the biblical instances take place in an agricultural setting there are plenty of comparisons to each of our lives even though the settings are quite different.

“Shepherd” was a word picture used for kings in the ancient Near East. Here David the king acknowledges that the Lord is his Shepherd-King. The term “Shepherd” is also used in the OT as a specific description for Jesus the Messiah. Every believer of all time is a ‘sheep’ of God, and says Jesus that He is “my shepherd.”

Martin Luther says: “A sheep must live entirely with its shepherd’s help, protection, and care.” Sheep:

- Are weak and are often in need of help.
- Cannot find the right way and often get lost.
- Cannot protect themselves against wild animals.
- Take comfort in the shepherd’s help and protection.

In John 10, Jesus calls Himself the Good Shepherd and gives attributes of what a good shepherd will do for his sheep. A good shepherd:

- *“calls his own sheep by name and leads them” 10:3*
- *“When he has brought them out (to the pasture), he goes ahead of them.” 10:4*
- *“He comes in and out and finds pasture.” 10:9*
- Ultimately *“lays down his life for the sheep.” 10:11, 15*

In John 10:16 Jesus says: *“And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd.” We present day Christians are a part of the “other sheep.”* As sinful human beings we:

- Need the saving Word to be fed properly.
- Cannot walk and remain on the right path without the Shepherd’s guidance.
- Cannot by our own power protect ourselves against all evil.
- Cannot gain help and comfort for ourselves in anxiety and distress.

As we are in His Word and use His sacraments we will recognize His voice. We will not follow false ‘shepherds’ but rather will run away from them to Jesus our true shepherd.

Prayer:

Dear Lord, help me to see my many weaknesses and utter helplessness. Help me to look to you for help in all my needs. Help me to constantly listen to your voice as it comes to me in Your Word. Amen.